DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 473 CG 028 359

TITLE To Lead Education Reform: An Appraisal of the Oregon Department of Education. No. 97-37.
INSTITUTION Oregon Secretary of State, Salem. Audits Div.
PUB DATE 28 Apr 97
NOTE 139p.
PUB TYPE Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (390) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization; Cost Effectiveness; Educational Finance; Elementary Secondary Education; Financial Audits; Information Management; *Organizational Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *State Departments of Education; State Regulation; State School District Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Oregon State Department of Education

ABSTRACT

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) operates under two main statutory charges: to administer state and federal programs, and to serve as the state's lead agent in implementing the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. This report presents the results of a contracted program evaluation of the ODE. Data were collected through document analysis, site visits, a telephone survey of 312 local education officials, and interviews with a total of 150 state-level policymakers, ODE officials, representatives of state agencies and interest groups, district and school administrators, and teachers. The study evaluated ODE on the basis of the kinds of activities most commonly carried out by state departments of education in an era of standards-based reform--leadership, capacity building, research and analysis, communication, and monitoring and enforcement. The report concludes that ODE has worked diligently to make progress in implementing the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, but that a midcourse correction is needed to keep the reform on track. Specifically, the ODE needs to assume a more activist leadership role. With regard to the supervision, management, and control of schools, ODE has not adequately adjusted to the demands of a new policy environment for public education in Oregon, particularly in terms of how it monitors school finance. The report offers 16 recommendations. Appendixes contain a description of evaluation methodology, an annotated bibliography of 18 sources, and a list of exceptions to compliance with generally accepted government auditing standards. (LMI)

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Secretary of State

State of Oregon

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

To Lead Education Reform:

An Appraisal of the Oregon Department of Education

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Audits Division

Contract Auditor: Management Analysis & Planning Associates, L.L.C.
San Francisco, California

Secretary of State

State of Oregon

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

To Lead Education Reform:

An Appraisal of the Oregon Department of Education

Audits Division

No. 97-37

April 28, 1997

The Honorable John Kitzhaber
Governor of Oregon
State Capitol Building
Salem, Oregon 97310

The Honorable Norma Paulus
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Department of Education
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97310

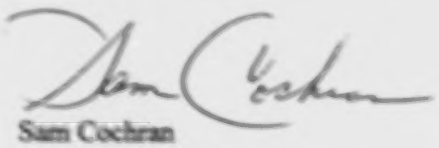
This report presents the results of our contracted program evaluation of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) by Management Analysis and Planning Associates, L.L.C. This review, which was approved by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, was planned and managed by the Legislative Fiscal Office, the Department of Administrative Services, and the Oregon Audits Division in a cooperative effort. In addition, the Oregon Audits Division received input from the Department of Justice, which advised us that this audit could be conducted under the authority of ORS 297.210.

The report concludes that ODE has worked diligently to make progress in implementing the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, but a mid-course correction is in order to keep the reform effort on track. Specifically, ODE needs to assume a more activist leadership role in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Oregon's schools. With regard to ODE's supervision, management, and control of schools, the report notes that ODE has not adequately adjusted to the demands of a new policy environment for public education in Oregon, particularly in terms of how it monitors school finance.

255 Capitol Street NE • Suite 500 • Salem, Oregon 97310 • (503) 986-2255
FAX (503) 378-6767 • INTERNET: Audits.hotline@state.or.us
http://www.sos.state.or.us/audits/auditbp.htm

To assist ODE in its educational reform efforts and to improve ODE operations, the report makes fourteen recommendations in the areas of leadership, monitoring and enforcement, capacity building, research and analysis, and communication.

OREGON AUDITS DIVISION



Sam Cochran
Acting State Auditor

Fieldwork Completion Date:
November 1, 1996

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) operates under two main statutory charges. One is to serve as the principal administrative agency for the State Board of Education:

> ...(ODE) shall exercise all administrative functions of the state relating to supervision, management and control of schools and community colleges not conferred by law on some other agency. (ORS 326.111(3)

This is the traditional regulatory and oversight role, mainly administering state and federal grant programs, that State Departments of Education across the country were originally established to discharge.

The second role is to serve as the State's lead agent in implementing Oregon's ambitious school reform legislation, the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century:

> The Department of Education shall be responsible for coordinating research, planning and public discussion so that activities necessary to the implementation of this chapter can be achieved. Actions by the department to fulfill this responsibility and to increase student achievement may include. . . (etc.) (ORS 329.075(2)).

With regard to the latter responsibility, this program evaluation concludes that ODE has worked diligently to make progress in implementing the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century but a mid-course correction is in order to keep the reform effort on track. Specifically, ODE needs to assume a more activist leadership role in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Oregon's schools. With regard to the former responsibility – the supervision, management and control of schools – ODE has not adequately adjusted to the demands of a new policy environment for public education in Oregon, particularly in terms of how it monitors school finance. Oregon voters in 1990 lowered property taxes and required that the state General Fund become the major revenue resource for local

schools and community college districts. The share of state funding of the general operating revenue of local schools has increased from 27 percent in 1989-91 to 66 percent in 1995-97. Clearly, such a preponderant state contribution implies an increased fiduciary responsibility on the part of state government to ensure that taxpayer money is being spent wisely. ODE must be in a position to provide the requisite data and analysis to ensure good use of state education dollars.

Background for this Study

This report is the culmination of seven months of review, research, and analysis by Management Analysis and Planning (MAP), a San Francisco-based education consulting firm. MAP, the successful bidder on a Request for Proposal released by the State of Oregon's Legislative Fiscal Office, Department of Administrative Services, and Secretary of State Audits Division, was asked to review ODE's "oversight of the local public (K-12) education system." In order to gather the most significant and comprehensive data, MAP employed a multi-pronged research strategy which included document analysis; state level interviews; Education Service District (ESD), school district, and school level interviews; and a telephone survey of a scientifically selected sample of approximately 300 local education officials.

MAP looked at ODE through five lenses - leadership, capacity building, research and analysis, communication, and monitoring and enforcement - which mirror the kinds of activities that modern State Departments of Education are undertaking in the era of standards-based school reform. The full report's findings, supporting evidence and recommendations are presented in terms of these five organizing categories. In this executive summary, however, we have aggregated findings and salient evidence around the two statutory responsibilities described above in order to present conclusions in a digested form but in a way

which retains their coherence. All of the report's 14 recommendations are then presented, with special attention to the three that would require legislative action for their realization.

Findings Regarding Implementation of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century

A) **ODE has made solid progress in implementing the performance standards feature of the school reform legislation.**

Evidence in the report supporting this finding includes the fact that ODE has established a statewide consensus around new content and performance standards by specific core subject areas. These have been favorably reviewed by an independent, nationally respected team of educators. ODE has also developed statewide assessments in reading, writing and mathematics which, informed observers agree, authentically measure student progress in these curricular areas and which are tied to the awarding of the Certificate of Initial Mastery in the 10th grade. According to curriculum association interviews, assessment progress in the remaining subject areas – science and social studies – may be more problematic. Nevertheless, in the survey conducted for this evaluation, Oregon educators tended to give ODE highest approval ratings for its work establishing performance standards.

B) **ODE employees do not regard themselves as having an important role in improving teaching and learning.**

Results on statewide tests in reading, writing and mathematics in Oregon have been generally static for the last few years. It is widely recognized that at present levels of performance only one in four students will satisfy proposed state mathematics standards for earning the Certificate of Initial Mastery by 10th grade. Nevertheless, ODE does not have a contingency plan in place for dealing with this

forseeable crisis nor a comprehensive implementation strategy in place to prevent it from happening, such as building the capacity of local districts and schools to meet the ambitious academic goals of the reform legislation. Pointing to the reform law, top ODE managers report that the responsibility for lagging student performance rests solely on the shoulders of local educators. The survey confirms that local educators do not see ODE as a resource providing technical assistance in such areas as professional development or financial management. In short, ODE seems not to have grasped that the reform statute provides only the basic blue line drawings for education improvement and that it remains ODE's responsibility to initiate a coherent set of strategies designed to bring it to fruition.

C) **ODE's current organizational structure neither conveys nor facilitates an activist leadership role in improving teaching and learning.**

An examination of ODE's organizational structure points to its funding sources, not a focus on the essentials of education - how teachers teach and what and how students learn. For example, the critical activity of statewide assessment is given equal organizational weight with special education while the various subject areas are nowhere to be found. In order to live within its budget, ODE has divested itself of its subject matter experts through reassignment or attrition. This is particularly problematic in Oregon because the state's largest school districts have also cut back on curricular staffing. Interviews revealed that ODE's organizational structure and intense workload discourage interstaff communication. Communication between ODE and the various subject matter associations - a vastly underutilized resource - were judged inadequate by representatives of those organizations.

D) **Current conditions preclude ODE from securing as employees the broad range of educational experts necessary to carry out the education reform.**

Salaries for education professionals at ODE lag significantly behind those in Oregon school districts. As a result, ODE shows many symptoms of not being competitive in the job market. Comparing Oregon's level of expenditure on its State Department of Education with six states of comparable size, MAP determined that Oregon spends about eight dollars per pupil below the average of comparison states. If ODE were funded at the average of this group, its budget would be approximately $4 million larger. Moreover, separating out additions due to absorption of the juvenile corrections education program, ODE full time equivalent positions have declined from 237 full time equivalent (FTE) positions in 1990 when the reform law was passed to 210 in the current biennium.

E) **Despite efforts to move from regulation to assistance, ODE continues to be perceived by its clients as primarily a regulatory and compliance organization.**

In the survey administered for this study, the word most frequently chosen by local educators to describe ODE was "bureaucratic." Local educators were nearly unanimous in saying that they would prefer ODE to act as a coach in Oregon education; in point of fact, however, the largest group saw ODE acting as a referee. Part of the problem is statutory. For example, ODE is required by law to conduct school improvement visits in every district in the state once every three years. For a variety of reasons, MAP strongly questions whether this is an effective use of ODE's limited resources.

Findings Relating to ODE's Supervision, Management and Control of Schools

F) ODE has little capacity to conduct research and analyze data on key issues such as student achievement and school finance.

Interviews with policy makers indicated that ODE is a spectator in Oregon's school funding process, a perception that ODE managers readily affirmed. But the change to a predominantly state-funded and performance-based school system means that policy makers have a greater need than ever before for objective, insightful analysis on key issues. For a variety of reasons, ODE is ill-equipped to provide such analysis, which could lead to unfortunate outcomes. For example, MAP found that ODE lacks the capacity to identify school districts in financial trouble and does not have a contingency plan for early intervention to prevent potential district bankruptcies.

G) ODE's current data collection system provides inadequate school level data.

Current accounting rules are sufficiently ambiguous and the level of aggregation of data reported to ODE is sufficiently gross that reasoned judgments about expenditure patterns between and among school districts is virtually impossible. ODE collects no data, for example, that would permit analysis of school level expenditures. But without such data, judgments about the cost-effectiveness of specific interventions will not be possible.

H) **ODE's current Management Information System is hobbled by interlocking conditions that compromise its utility.**

ODE's MIS lacks a coherent philosophical underpinning; collects largely compliance-oriented information; and has not been recalibrated to satisfy the changing needs of state policy makers.

I) **Annual audits represent an underutilized opportunity for appropriate state oversight of district expenditure patterns.**

District financial statements are currently audited annually, as required by the Municipal Audit Law. Although the State Auditor sets certain standards for audits, individual audits are not standardized in Oregon and school districts have little incentive to expand their scope. Many states make far better use of the auditing function as a cost effective alternative to operating without necessary information or conducting School Improvement Visits to verify compliance items.

J) **ODE does not employ systematic comprehensive planning and budgeting as an internal management tool.**

Interviews found that ODE managers have only provisional control over their office budgets. Planning is episodic and ad hoc. Priority activities may be planned; but one gets the impression that priorities tend to shift and proliferate. The Superintendent confirmed that virtually all budget decisions are made in her office.

K) **The elected office of Superintendent of Public Instruction tends to fragment responsibility for education.**

The Oregon Constitution requires that the state superintendent be elected. However, real authority for determining levels of funding for education in Oregon resides with the governor and legislature. When programmatic leadership and budgeting power are split, no one is ultimately responsible to the voters for the functioning of the schools.

Recommendations

1. **ODE should assume a more activist role in improving curriculum and instruction in Oregon's schools.**

To do so, the full report explains, ODE needs to articulate a clear vision of what works in education; develop in its organization a clear understanding of the change process; develop a comprehensive, evolutionary implementation strategy; and, appreciate that education improvement is a team effort.

Cost estimate: neutral

2. **ODE should be reorganized to reflect a priority for those functions most closely related to improving educational programs as well as to enhance necessary communication among key program improvement functions.**

The full report presents one possible model of such a restructuring. It recommends that ODE create the position of Chief Deputy Superintendent with lead responsibility for improving teaching and learning in local schools. It also recommends that ODE rebuild its subject matter expertise.

Cost estimate: $100,000-125,000 for Chief Deputy Superintendent

3. **ODE should develop for every organizational unit annual work plans with measurable outcomes and budgets specified.**

Cost estimate: neutral

4. **ODE, in cooperation with the legislature and appropriate state agencies, should take the steps necessary to attract and retain professionals with**

sufficient credibility to lead implementation of Oregon's Educational Act for the 21st Century.

Cost estimate: Deputy Superintendents should be paid $90-95,000 per year; Assistant and Associate Superintendents $75-80,000; Specialists, $60-75,000.

5. **The elected position of Superintendent of Public Instruction should be replaced with an appointed position.**

Most states have turned to this solution – only 15 still elect their chief state school officer. A strong majority of educators, according to the survey, favor such a change.

Cost estimate: $125-150,000 less present SPI's salary

6. **Conventional kinds of monitoring and enforcement activities should be streamlined and reduced.**

For example, the law requiring ODE to do School Improvement Visits should be repealed. Cost effective alternatives are suggested in the full report.

Cost estimate: Unspecified savings should be used by ODE for more productive ends.

7. **Essential monitoring and enforcement activities should be consolidated into a single, relatively small unit of ODE.**

Cost estimate: Unspecified savings

8. **ODE should strategically redeploy the resources currently being used for "technical assistance" in Oregon to create multiple networks of service providers across the state. ODE's role should be as a catalyst and clearinghouse for such efforts, not as a direct provider.**

See Chapter Five, "Perspectives on Implementation" for an example of how another state has handled this challenge.

Cost estimate: $2-3 million for 5000 teachers in Oregon going through 3-5 week summer workshops each summer with follow-up exercises through the year.

9. **ODE should assign a much higher priority to the professional development of its own staff.**

Cost estimate: neutral, but time must be scheduled for this important activity.

10. **ODE needs to greatly increase its research and analytical capability.**

Cost estimate: Approximately $150,000 - 225,000 for 2-3 FTE with expertise in finance, assessment and data management.

11. **ODE needs to play a more active role in the development, collection and reporting of financial information.**

The full report recommends that ODE assign its highest priority to standardizing accounting procedures among districts. It recommends that ODE analyze district budgets before the beginning of each school year and require at least one mid-year expenditure report. It also recommends that ODE develop contingency plans for dealing with districts which find themselves nearing bankruptcy and suggests a model intervention plan from another state with predominantly state-funded schools.

Cost estimate: $2-3 million to create a uniform data system; plus approximately $120,000 - 180,000 for 2-3 FTE to increase analytic capability.

12. **ODE should establish a single departmental database of information that is accessible to anyone within ODE and that facilitates responsive answers to policy makers and other interested parties.**

The full report recommends that ODE must first: determine what kind of data policy makers and others might want; second, develop a "data dictionary" (directory of definitions and locations); third, determine the frequency and mode of data collection; and, fourth, move toward a standardized format for all data.

Cost estimate: ODE plans to use hardware from another agency; software costs are already in ODE's budget. Training costs will be incurred but only for those individuals with direct responsibility for operating the data system.

13. **ODE in conjunction with the State Auditor should expand existing local district CPA audits to provide more information for policy makers.**

Cost estimate: Costs need to be calculated based on the extent to which audit scope is expanded.

14. **ODE should adjust its communications to its various "publics" and develop feedback loops capable of measuring the effectiveness of its efforts.**

Cost estimate: $50-75,000 to perform annual surveys.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MAP wishes gratefully to acknowledge all those in Oregon who have made this report possible. Legislators gave generously of their time. Members of the Governor's staff were always helpful and available to us. The Superintendent and her staff unselfishly provided us with their time to talk, gather materials, and offer useful suggestions. We appreciate especially their candor. Administrators and teachers with whom we spoke in ESDs, school districts, and schools likewise were generous with their time and candid in their views.

Without the cooperation of literally hundreds of individuals, this evaluation would not have been completed. Any errors of fact which remain are MAP's.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This report represents an evaluation of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). It is the culmination of seven months of review, research, and analysis by Management Analysis and Planning (MAP) Associates, a California-based education consulting firm. MAP, the successful bidder on a Request for Proposal (RFP) released by the State of Oregon's Legislative Fiscal Office, Department of Administrative Services, and Secretary of State Audits Division was asked to review ODE's "oversight of the local public (K-12) education system." The scope of this appraisal, in other words, is the role and function of the Oregon Department of Education vis à vis the state's kindergarten through twelfth grade system of public schools.

BACKGROUND ABOUT ODE

The Oregon Department of Education is the State's lead agency for overseeing and improving Oregon's public prekindergarten through grade 12 and community college education systems. ODE's mission, as directed by the State Board of Education, is to assure excellent and equitable educational opportunities resulting in the development of every Oregonian's self-esteem, potential (including academic skills and knowledge), ability to enter the workforce, and lifelong learning capability. ODE is headed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, an elected position established by the Oregon Constitution. The statutorily-authorized State Board of Education is responsible for policymaking, planning, and evaluation of public elementary, secondary and community college education. A major role of the Superintendent, State Board and ODE in recent

years has been to provide statewide leadership in the implementation of Oregon's sweeping, standards-based education reform legislation, the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century.

ODE serves 220 elementary and secondary school districts and 23 education service districts (ESDs), which in turn serve some 552,000 elementary and secondary school students (grades K-12). In addition, ODE directly manages the Oregon School for the Blind, the Oregon School for the Deaf, and most of the education programs for adjudicated youth. In carrying out its responsibilities, ODE interacts with a number of associated state entities including the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, Office of Community College Services, Oregon Progress Board, Workforce Quality Council, Oregon State System of Education, Oregon Commission on Children and Families, and the Oregon Youth Authority.

ODE's budget for the 1995-97 biennium (see Tables which follow) totals $4.15 billion, of which $3.55 billion is distributed as state support to local school districts, ESDs, and juvenile corrections. An additional $514.7 million, including federal funds, passes through to local districts in the form of grants-in-aid for specific special education, pre-kindergarten, nutrition and other programs. ODE's adopted operating budget, not including the cost of running the various special schools listed above, is $44.4 million, which funds 209.63 full-time equivalent employees to carry out ODE's administrative and program management responsibilities.

ODE OPERATING BUDGET
by expenditure category and fund source

	1995-97 Operating Budget	Percent of Category	Percent of Total
PERSONAL SERVICES			
General Funds	9,788,656	46%	
Other Funds	3,063,322	15%	
Federal Funds	8,218,271	39%	
All Funds	21,070,249	100%	47.5%
SERVICES AND SUPPLIES			
General Funds	4,487,889	20%	
Other Funds	10,955,226	48%	
Federal Funds	7,483,373	33%	
All Funds	22,926,488	100%	51.6%
CAPITAL OUTLAY			
General Funds	207,192	100%	0.5%
SPECIAL PAYMENTS			
Other Funds	75,000	39%	
Federal Funds	115,000	61%	
All Funds			0.4%
ALL EXPENDITURES			
General Funds	14,483,747	33%	
Other Funds	14,093,548	32%	
Federal Funds	15,817,193	36%	
All Funds	44,394,488		100%

NOTE: Percentages may total more than 100% due to rounding.

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ODE TOTAL BUDGET
by expenditure category and fund source

	1995-97 Adopted Budget	Percent of Budget	Percent of Total
DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS			
General Funds	14,483,747	33%	
Other Funds	14,093,548	32%	
Federal Funds	15,817,193	36%	
All Funds	44,394,488	100%	1.1%
SPECIAL SCHOOLS			
General Funds	12,587,595	40%	
Other Funds	17,785,543	56%	
Federal Funds	1,414,403	4%	
All Funds	31,787,541	100%	0.8%
GRANT-IN-AID			
General Funds	102,639,915	20%	
Other Funds	26,794,046	5%	
Federal Funds	389,669,197	75%	
All Funds	519,103,158	100%	12.5%
STATE SCHOOL FUND			
General Funds	3,015,601,000	85%	
Other Funds	536,999,000	15%	
All Funds	3,552,600,000	100%	85.6%
TOTALS			
General Funds	3,143,312,263	76%	
Other Funds	595,672,135	14%	
Federal Funds	406,898,792	10%	
All Funds	4,147,883,190	100%	100%

NOTE: Percentages may total more than 100% due to rounding.

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In the wake of voter-approved property tax reform, the State share of funding of the general operating revenue of local schools has increased from 27 percent in 1989-91 to 66 percent in 1995-97. As a result, the total amount of money passing through ODE has increased tremendously in recent years - from $2.3 billion in 1991-93 to $4.15 billion in 1995-97. At the same time, however, ODE's operating budget has remained relatively static or even declined in absolute terms - going from $44.67 million in 1993-95 to $44.4 million in 1995-97.

ODE has a relatively flat organizational structure. Currently, two deputy superintendents and seven assistant or associate superintendents report directly to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Organizational units reporting directly to the Superintendent include Special Education; Professional Technical Education; Student Services; Compensatory Education; Curriculum, Instruction and Field Services; Assessment; State Board Relations; and Education Support Services.

Additional detail on management structures, procedures, and techniques can be found in Chapter 3 Findings of this report.

STATE POLICY CONTEXT

During the 1990s, the governor and Legislative Assembly (legislature) have come to play an increasingly prominent role in education matters in Oregon. While it may be the case, as one official told us, that, "Oregon is no place to practice centralized government," it is also true that over the course of the last decade, the State – in the form of the governor and the legislature – has come to occupy a larger place at the education table. This new, and more prominent, state role in education matters is entirely appropriate.

Education, to be sure, is important to individual citizens' well-being. Increasingly, however, education is also important to the health of Oregon's

economy. Oregon is no longer a loosely coupled confederation of independent, and largely self-sufficient, agrarian communities. The State is ever more reliant on, for example, firms that specialize in high tech, draw workers from throughout Oregon, and require employees with solid educational backgrounds and high levels of skills. A robust economy requires that state policy makers be concerned with ensuring that the State's young people adequately are prepared for jobs in these new Oregon industries.

In addition to these economic concerns, two critical events – the passage by Oregon citizens of tax limitation measures and the enactment by the legislature of a major education reform statute – have put state policy makers front and center in education decision making.

While on many dimensions Oregon still retains its strong historical commitment to local control, the implementation of tax limitation, as specified in Measure 5, has transformed the education finance system into one in which the state dominates. The state collects and distributes dollars to local school districts. State lawmakers, rather than local school boards, now have a fiduciary responsibility to Oregon taxpayers to ensure that those dollars are well spent.

The Educational Act for the 21st Century, Oregonian omnibus reform measure, has put the State in the driver's seat in terms of "drawing the box" around what is expected of schools and required of students. While local districts and schools are expected to determine *how* student achievement will be improved, the legislature now specifies *what* districts and schools must focus on and the standards by which their accomplishments will be measured.

The current governor has given education a prominent place on his agenda. He has appointed a blue ribbon task force to identify the components of a "basic education" and to determine the cost of ensuring that all students in Oregon are able to gain access to such an education. More recently the governor has proposed a statewide teacher salary schedule and a form of "pay for performance" which would monetarily reward groups of teachers whose students

achieve at rates faster than anticipated. MAP's purpose here is not to comment on the merits of any of these initiatives, but simply to use them as illustrations of the governor's interest in and commitment to education as a key policy matter for the State.

The imperatives of a changing economy, citizen-enacted tax limitation, and a statewide reform initiative, then, all have combined to give state policy makers an ever larger stake in education policy and increasing opportunities, and obligations, to exert education leadership. However, the state legislature has sent mixed messages regarding its commitment to education reform.

The Educational Act for the 21st Century was passed in 1991, amended in 1995, and will be up for review before a legislative committee in 1997. While some amount of mid-course correction in a reform effort as ambitious as this one is to be expected, the legislature is widely perceived as continually modifying – or threatening to modify – the essential purpose and substance of the Act, thus engendering skepticism regarding the State's commitment to education reform. This chary view of the State's intention to continue for the foreseeable future down the path it has laid out was captured in the statement of one official who reported that, "Reality [in terms of education] exists in Oregon in two-year increments," an obvious reference to the legislative biennium.

The statutorily-authorized State Board of Education is not generally viewed as a significant player in Oregon's education policy arena. State Board members clearly are committed to their responsibilities; they take them seriously and devote much time and effort to state board work. Nonetheless, the consensus among legislators, representatives of major interest groups, and local educators is consistent: the State Board of Education wields little influence over matters of education policy.

We hasten here to add that the role Oregon's State Board of Education has carved out is appropriate. A state board of education should set policy, within the context of state law. The department of education then has the responsibility to

administer that policy. A state board of education should not—and Oregon's does not—compete with the governor and legislature to establish board-scale macro-policy, nor should the state board involve itself with the details of legislative implementation.

In many states, court actions have shaped education policy. Desegregation decisions have determined district and school boundary lines and means for assigning students to schools. Finance decisions have prescribed the methods by which dollars are allocated. More far-reaching judicial determinations in some states have actually provided the architecture for education reform policies and practices.

This is not the case in Oregon. There is no significant education area in which litigation or other forms of judicial action have been the driving forces. To be sure, legal action is sometimes threatened and lawsuits occasionally filed, but at this juncture, neither threats nor actual suits have had a direct impact on fundamental matters of state education policy or practice.

Various interest groups—those representing administrators, school boards, teachers and parents, for example—are influential at the state level on individual and particular education matters. However, it is rare for interest groups to coalesce and speak with one voice on issues. While each group holds opinions on matters central to education in Oregon, there is no evidence that these organizations function as a policy coalition. Thus, on balance, interest group influence over education policy matters is rather diffuse.

MAP'S FRAME OF REFERENCE

Before briefly describing the methodology employed in the conduct of this study and outlining the organization of the remainder of this report, we want to emphasize the criticality of context for the findings and results of this work. By

context we mean, in particular, the central role education and education reform have come to play in Oregon.

Implementing the Educational Act for the 21st Century is the dominant function of ODE. It is this responsibility – transforming a comprehensive statute enacted by Oregon's elected state leaders into a plan of operation that will enable districts and schools to realize the Act's promise of improved student achievement – that has swamped all other ODE tasks. And rightly so. Implementing reform on a grand scale is complex, cumbersome, and time consuming. It requires the agency to reconceptualize its mission, rethink its priorities and reorient its staff. It requires, in short, ODE to focus consistently and systematically on both the "big picture" and the details of the reform law. It is the reform act that, in large measure, now gives shape and substance to ODE's role and its responsibilities.[1]

Why does all of this matter? It matters because in thinking about how ODE goes about doing its work, the requirements of improving teaching and learning are paramount. Principal ODE alignments and operations need to be constructed around this obligation of enhancing education quality and improving student achievement results.

To illustrate more concretely, let us consider for a moment organizational structure. A reasonable person might well assume that there exists some generic management structure that successful state departments of education ought to emulate. After all, is there not some sort of template, specifying numbers and types of personnel and assigned duties, that could be superimposed on any state agency charged with responsibility for education?

The answer is "no." Organization and management structures are contextual. The "test" for ODE is not the number of accountants or deputy superintendents or program area specialists it employs. The test is the extent to

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[1] The only other defining dynamic in the Oregon education arena which carries such an impact is tax limitation and the shift to a state-funded school system.

which ODE's organizational structure enhances or inhibits the agency's ability to carry out, and to assist districts and schools to carry out, the purposes of the Educational Act for the 21st Century. No amount of legislative manipulation or infusion of new management procedures or techniques can compensate for inadequate vision and leadership. The challenges before ODE are educational challenges, not generic management issues.

What, then, a reader might ask, would happen if the reform act was replaced by an entirely different statute, one that specified a different set of duties and responsibilities? Would the same organizational structure that serves ODE well when one statute is dominant serve equally well when another prevails? The answer is, "probably not."

An agency must be organized for some specific purpose or set of purposes, and must be managed to accomplish a particular set of goals. Alter the purposes and goals and the structure must also be modified.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The scope of this evaluation is ODE's role and function in relation to the state's kindergarten through twelfth grade public school system. Specifically excluded were the state special schools for the deaf and blind and the Office of Community College Services.

In order to gather the most comprehensive and accurate data, MAP employed a multi-pronged research strategy which included document analysis, interviews, and a telephone survey of a scientifically selected sample of local education officials. In the first phase of the evaluation, MAP identified the critical issues to be explored, developed provisional study questions, reviewed salient background documents, and conducted preliminary interviews with key ODE officials and state policy makers.

Next, MAP refined its workplan, adjusted study questions, and generated questions for the survey of local educators. The third phase of the study consisted of fact-finding and analysis. During this period, MAP engaged in additional document review, conducted numerous interviews, and administered and analyzed the results of the previously mentioned statewide survey. These analytic activities led to the validation, and sometimes the rejection, of working hypotheses.

Phase four consisted of identifying findings and forming conclusions and recommendations. These were "tested" with ODE officials, other state officials, and with the external advisory board which provided advice and counsel to MAP during the course of this study.

We reviewed audit workpapers prepared by the Audits Division for ODE for the 1996 statewide financial audit including the state school support apportionment formula. We also reviewed the department's budget.

Finally, a report was prepared and submitted to the client. Except as noted in Appendix C, this audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. We limited our review to the areas specified in this section of the report.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report is divided into six chapters:

- Chapter 1 is the introductory material contained here.
- Chapter 2 more fully describes evolving roles for departments of education generally and for the Oregon Department of Education specifically.
- Chapter 3 is the set of Findings, in other words, the data-driven conclusions derived from MAP's study of ODE. Findings, which are numbered sequentially for ease of reading, are divided into five categories: 1) leadership, 2) monitoring and enforcement, 3) capacity building, 4) research and analysis, and 5) communication.
- Chapter 4 presents MAP's Recommendations regarding changes ODE might consider in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Recommendations are also numbered sequentially and divided into the five previously described categories.
- Chapter 5 presents the results of a survey of local Oregon educators conducted for this study.
- Chapter 6, Perspectives On Implementation, offers a set of lessons learned and exemplary practices from other states that are undertaking reform efforts similar to Oregon's.
- Chapter 7 offers some concluding remarks.

Following the five chapters are two supporting appendices:

- Appendix A describes MAP's methodology for this study – how we obtained and analyzed data that allowed us to generate findings and develop recommendations.
- Appendix B provides a set of references. It is, in effect, a "Read More About It" section that offers suggested books, papers, and reports for those interested in pursuing more deeply some of the topics germane to this study.

Chapter 2

THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

This report begins from a relatively simple premise: that the mission of a state department of education is, or ought to be, continuous improvement of teaching and learning in local schools. In Oregon the Legislative Assembly has made this responsibility explicit, assigning the Oregon Department of Education a leadership role in K-12 school improvement as outlined in the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. Taken together, the 1991 reform law (HB 3565) and its 1995 companion, HB 2991, have created an ambitious set of expectations by subject area and age group for Oregon students to attain. Progress toward meeting these goals is one index of the relative effectiveness of ODE. Hence, the title of this report: "To Lead Education Reform: An Appraisal of the Oregon Department of Education."

At the same time the state is engaged in its omnibus education reform efforts, Oregon has undergone a fundamental shift in the way in which it finances its schools. Voter-approved initiatives have transformed Oregon's school finance system from one that was property-tax-based and locally controlled to a system in which the *state* is the principal source of education revenue. Thus, state policy makers are at once concerned about the results of the education reform they have set in motion and more intensely interested in the dollars they now distribute to districts and schools.

Substantive improvement in Oregon's schools is certainly a policy goal devoutly to be wished. Unfortunately, as Sam Johnson put it, "Change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better." For better or worse, Oregonians have been engaged in a persistent effort to reinvent their public school system over at least the last twenty years. This Chapter reviews the larger state

and national context for this effort. It reviews, first, the underlying forces that have driven change in Oregon's public school system; second, some reasons why school improvement consistently turns out to be far more difficult to accomplish in practice than on paper; and, third, the nature of the new leadership role that State Departments of Education (SDEs) have begun to take on as standards-based reform unfolds across the nation.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF EDUCATION REFORM

Oregon has a reputation for finding original solutions to tough policy challenges. The Bottle Bill, public access to beaches, and the Oregon Health Plan are all examples of innovations with a "made in Oregon" stamp that have attracted widespread national attention and, not infrequently, imitation. So it is perhaps not surprising that in 1984, when the President's Commission on Excellence in Education ushered in the modern era of public school reform in the United States with its disquieting report, "A Nation at Risk," that Oregon turned out to be already working on the problem.

Certainly, the theme of "A Nation at Risk" – that students in this country were being inadequately prepared to compete in a global marketplace which increasingly demanded the ability to solve problems, think creatively, communicate clearly and adapt to change – resonated in the Oregon of the 1980s. At the time, the State was mired in a stubborn regional recession. The long-standing backbone of the economy – the forest products industry – was in decline as a source of family wage jobs. Whatever shape the future might take, it was apparent to leaders that the State's youth needed to be educated to a much higher level of proficiency than had previously been the case.

How large a role state government should play in fostering a transformation of the public schools, however, was by no means clear. Oregon has traditionally been a strong "local control" state. That is, schools were funded

mainly by local property taxes and decisions concerning how they were to be run were made mainly by locally elected school boards. This arrangement worked satisfactorily for many decades. Oregon's college-bound students scored in the upper third of state cohorts on national college entrance exams. Per pupil expenditures consistently exceeded the national average despite a state income slightly below the national average, a level of taxpayer "effort" demonstrating strong popular support for the public education ideal in Oregon.

The forces of change were gaining momentum in the 1970s, however, moving along two parallel tracks: concern about school quality and school finance. Prior to "A Nation at Risk," the Oregon Department of Education had recognized the importance of no longer judging school quality by simply measuring the "inputs" to the system – How much instructional seat time were children receiving? How many books were stocked in the school library? How large was the average class size? ODE began to focus on results: what did students know and what were they able to do as a result of their schooling? In 1984, in response to "A Nation at Risk," the State Board of Education took the next step and adopted the Oregon Action Plan for Excellence. The Plan, as it was fleshed out in legislation in subsequent years (The School Improvement and Development Act, 1987; The 21st Century Schools Act, 1989) struck a mutually acceptable "deal" with local control advocates. On one hand, the State would lead the effort to establish consensus over what specific goals students should be able to reach in the respective academic disciplines and it would develop a statewide assessment system to measure the performance of all students against those standards. On the other, state regulators would then "get out of the way" of districts and schools, waiving many non-essential requirements and freeing local educators to design and carry out school improvement strategies responsive to their unique circumstances.

Finance Reform

Meanwhile pressure for change was also building on the school finance front. As was happening across the nation, the average cost of educating a student in Oregon had been growing in real terms since the mid-1960s. But, with the cost of K-12 education underwritten mainly by the local property tax in Oregon, the capacity to support that increasing burden varied significantly from community to community. With the economy flagging, particularly in rural areas, school bond levies began to fail with distressing frequency. Even where levies passed, the amount of money spent per pupil tended to differ substantially from district to district, opening the financing system to charges of structural unfairness. Various interest groups addressed the constellation of school funding problems in the 1980s through the popular vote, alternately trying to shift the burden through a sales tax (which Oregonians soundly defeated) or put a cap on the property tax (which they also defeated several times, but by progressively narrower margins).

Finally, within a few months of each other, the two forces for change converged with decisive impact at the beginning of this decade. In November 1990, Oregon voters passed local property tax limitation. Ballot Measures 5 (and its successor, Ballot Measure 47) effectively reversed the traditional relationship between local and state funding of schools. The local property tax share of school funding shrank from 60 percent in 1990 prior to Ballot Measure 5 to 29 percent in 1995-96; meanwhile, the State share increased from 27 percent in 1989-91 to 66 percent in 1995-97. Undeterred by the financial constraints this reversal portended, the Legislative Assembly overwhelmingly approved HB 3565, the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, in June 1991. The Act moved Oregon to the forefront of a national standards-based reform movement whose intention was to dramatically improve the academic performance of students. The major features of the Oregon bill – high academic goals, explicit content standards, a statewide assessment system to measure student performance, school site councils

at every school, certificates of initial and advanced mastery, and a school-to-work program—confirmed and extended the essential accommodation with Oregon's local control tradition established in the 1980s. The State would focus attention on the ends of education; local districts and schools would determine the means for getting there.

Significantly, the State's main agent for leading the reform agenda was to be the Oregon Department of Education. As the law put it:

> The Department of Education shall be responsible for coordinating research, planning and public discussion so that activities necessary to the implementation of this chapter (Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century) can be achieved. Actions by the department to fulfill this responsibility and to increase student achievement may include. . . (etc.) (ORS 329.075(2)).

However, although given enormous new responsibilities, ODE was not strengthened in size or overall budget to carry them out. In fact, separating out additions due to the absorption of the juvenile corrections education program, ODE has actually decreased in size between 1990 and the present, going from 237 full time employees (FTE) in 1990 to 210 FTE today, a reduction in force of approximately 12 percent.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF EDUCATION REFORM

As alluded to at the outset, Oregon's reform legislation sets an ambitious agenda for ODE. The stated goal of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century is that the state's public schools are to produce "the best educated citizens in the nation by the year 2000 and a work force equal to any in the world by the year 2010." Are such lofty goals realistically attainable? So far, efforts at reform

have not translated into readily discernible improvements in student achievement. The scores of Oregon students on college entrance exams historically have exceeded the national average. In 1995, results on the Scholastic Assessment Test spiked upward another twenty points, a gain that was almost maintained in 1996. Nevertheless, the picture that emerges from student performance over time on statewide reading, writing and mathematics tests at the third, fifth, eighth and tenth grades is more one of stability than dramatic improvement. In mathematics, for example, results since 1992 have been flat at every grade level. At the present level of performance only one in four students will satisfy proposed state mathematics standards for earning the Certificate of Initial Mastery by 10th grade.

Does this mean ODE is failing in its reform assignment? Not yet, it does not. In terms of the effort, investment and time it will reasonably take to move the entire public school system forward, the reform movement in Oregon is still in its infancy. Stagnant test results certainly justify a closer examination of the strategies ODE is pursuing to influence instructional practice at the local level. On the other hand, they also suggest that the time may have come for adjusting collective expectations concerning how fast systemic improvement is likely to take hold. It is not unusual for test scores actually to drop in the early reform stages. "Flat" scores, therefore, are not yet cause for alarm.

Change is possible. However, reinventing an entire state education system to achieve higher student performance is an enormously complex task. For example, improving student performance implies the need to improve the quality of instruction which, in turn, implies the need for professional development. But consider the logistics. There are approximately 25,000 teachers in Oregon. Granted that each subject area has a unique domain of state-of-the-art pedagogical approaches for teachers to acquire, that teachers often operate across the subject area domains, and that continuous improvement itself is messy and time-consuming, the possibilities for various forms of staff development in the curricular areas alone are extensive. Meanwhile, staff development must also be

affordable, targeted where it will yield the highest payoff, and executed in a way that does not interfere with the main mission of schools: keeping the classroom alive with learning.

The point is, setting higher standards and assessing student performance will not bring about achievement of the performance standards by itself. Most local school districts and teachers are already working as hard as they can to educate the State's children. To improve outcomes, teachers and schools must begin to work in a new way. But many educators do not know what that new way might be. Unless the State provides leadership in promoting appropriate curricular and instructional innovation and providing adequate funding and infrastructure support, a high percentage of students will continue to fall below the demanding academic standards set by the reform law.

Effective state system reform is even more complex than already described, however, because it also involves extensive change beyond the school-yard walls. Higher education programs need to prepare new teachers to use instructional strategies that have proved effective in improving student learning. Higher education also needs to tie college admissions standards to the new performance standards expected of high school graduates. Businesses need to offer work-related educational experiences and require proof of academic accomplishment as a condition of employment. Perhaps the most searching changes are those required of the families of Oregon schoolchildren. Parents need to become an integral part of the education process by participating in their children's learning at school and at home. They need to create an environment at home that supports learning by reserving time to help with homework, for recreational reading and meaningful conversation with their children.

In sum, school change is slow, difficult, incremental, and even generational, precisely because it involves social change. The good news is, Oregon's school reform legislation recognized this latter fact from the outset. Accordingly, ODE's approach to reform has been reasonably comprehensive, has recruited the

participation of many of the major players in the education effort; and has demonstrated an impressive degree of planning among its various parts.

It is important to remember, however, that planning for change is easy compared to making change actually happen. Nor will ODE's faithful carrying out of the letter of the law, by itself, produce the desired results. Only planning supplemented by a comprehensive implementation strategy that offers new options and support to local practitioners stands a fighting chance of success. Such a strategy builds on a clear vision of desired student outcomes and the characteristics of schools capable of producing them. It grows out of a careful analysis of the resources that will be required to produce the desired outcomes compared with the resources available to do the job. And it results in a set of priorities for deciding what is to be done, when, and by whom. In short, carrying out complex reform requires that the agency charged with primary responsibility for its success have a detailed but flexible strategic implementation plan, tailored to the state's specific assets, context and policy environment. It requires that ODE "invent" new ways to behave as it moves further down the reform implementation road. This is, indeed, uncharted territory.

A NEW ROLE FOR STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

Oregon statutes reflect two distinct functions for ODE. One is to serve as the principal administrative agency for the State Board of Education:

> ...the department shall exercise all administrative functions of the state relating to supervision, management and control of schools and community colleges not conferred by law on some other agency. (ORS 326.111(3))

The second function, cited early in this Chapter, is to lead the implementation of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century.

The first of these functions is primarily administrative and regulatory and is the traditional oversight and fund-dispensing role that most state departments of education were created to discharge. The second is a much newer, more open-ended role requiring ODE to exercise leadership in a variety of unfamiliar ways to implement comprehensive, standards-based reform. So it is that the present is, indeed, a period of transition for ODE, with natural tensions arising as it attempts to reconcile its traditional identity as an enforcer of state and federal rules with its emerging role as a catalyst for change.

The Oregon Department of Education is not alone in this uncomfortable spot. Standards-based education reform, such as Oregon has underway, is currently the school change strategy of choice across much of the United States. Enough experience has been gained with the new leadership role for SDEs that a few useful generalizations can begin to be made about it. In particular, leadership of standards-based reform seems to involve SDEs in the following five kinds of critical activities:

- Setting standards and assessing student progress toward them;
- Strengthening the capacity of local schools and districts to improve instruction and student learning;

- Conducting research and analysis needed by policy makers to guide and support school improvement efforts;
- Communicating with the various publics so that all parties remain active participants in the reform process; and,
- Providing essential monitoring of state and federal education programs.

Each of these activities will be briefly discussed in turn.

Standards and Assessment – The setting of standards and development of statewide assessments that accurately monitor student progress toward them is the starting point for standards-based reform and a basic leadership function of modern SDEs. Writing standards is a difficult task in itself, requiring considerable subject-by-subject expertise. To be effective, however, the process of standard-setting must build consensus and buy-in among critical constituents, including professional educators, parents, business representatives, and the public. And that takes time, effort and diplomacy. Creating statewide assessments linked to the subject area standards that accurately measure the breadth and depth of student knowledge and ability to perform is a critical task in successful reform. Statewide assessments are among the most powerful tools at an SDE's disposal for influencing what is taught in local classrooms.

Creating appropriate assessments to statewide scale is a significant technical challenge. Indeed, in certain subject areas it has not yet been successfully carried out anywhere in the nation. It is imperative that the statewide assessment align with the curriculum standards in any given subject area because, as the saying goes in education (and research abundantly affirms) "what you test is what you get." Assessment is a sword that cuts two ways: good assessments will send the right signals to the field; but poorly designed assessments will actively discourage good instruction and run the risk of trivializing student learning. Statewide assessment results, properly disaggregated and analyzed, provide a rich

lode of data identifying strengths and weaknesses in the performance of the school system. The information, in turn, can help guide strategic decisions concerning the use of discretionary resources.

Capacity Building – Another critical, on-going responsibility for an SDE in the modern era of reform is to assist schools and school districts to develop the capacity to deliver high performance instruction. This rarely involves the direct provision of services; SDEs are too small to make an impact on statewide school systems by frontal assault. Rather, capacity building typically involves forming alliances of service providers and making sure, through the strategic implementation plan, that the highest priority needs with the greatest potential payoff in terms of improved student learning are being addressed. A focus on capacity building means a major change in outlook for organizations long accustomed to monitoring for compliance with state statutes and regulations. In order to build local capacity through systematic professional development the modern SDE must have, for example, subject area specialists in the major academic disciplines who have a working knowledge of "best practice" instructional approaches, responsibility for organizing professional development opportunities, and an almost evangelical commitment to improving student learning in their fields. To use a sports analogy, the role of SDE personnel must shift from functioning predominantly as referees who dispassionately oversee the action on the school "playing field" to being coaches who proactively assist their team improve its performance.

Research and Analysis – An organization that is focused on assistance and coordination of effort needs high quality research and information to guide its initiatives. State legislators and policy-makers also require accurate and easily accessible information concerning the allocation and relative effectiveness of resources dedicated to schools, the progress of students toward statewide standards, and the potential for providing educational services through alternative methods. Much attention should be directed to analyzing subtle trends

implicit in the statewide assessments and using that information to direct the strategic implementation plan. To provide timely and accurate information to policy makers, modern SDEs also need an operational management information system and financial information system.

Communication – School improvement is not something than can be accomplished by an SDE acting alone. It requires the support and involvement of a host of coequal participants: teachers, administrators, the curriculum associations, school boards, parents, business leaders, higher education programs, and, of course, students. SDEs must do an effective job of communicating with these various "publics" about the goals and strategies for school improvement. This communication must be more than mere reportage. A consistent message, which reinforces the State's overall education improvement strategy, must be crafted and tailored for various audiences.

Essential Monitoring – There will always be an irreducible set of federal and state requirements that SDEs must monitor. Rules to protect the health, safety and civil rights of children must be closely observed. Federal and state statutes must be obeyed, among other reasons, to preserve a state's fair share of financial support for categorical programs. Additionally, in this era of contemporary education reform, the monitoring and enforcement function focuses much more intensely on monitoring for results – what students demonstrate they know and are able to do – and, implementing a system to hold districts and schools accountable for students' achievements.

Taken together, the five functions described above define the leadership role of a modern SDE. Leadership does not mean providing a technical "fix" for every problem that comes up. Leadership for reform means building a broad-based consensus around a coherent vision of improved teaching and learning. That vision must then be supported by concrete strategies for achieving it over the long term. Effective SDEs become the facilitator of broad coalitions of public and private partners who are committed to the achievement of high academic

standards. The hard work of improving schools will be done in communities and in schools. SDEs support and lead this work – through standard setting, continuing assessment, capacity building, research and analysis, communication and essential monitoring.

The citizens of Oregon have undertaken a major challenge: namely, substantially to improve the academic performance of students in the State's public schools. At the same time, Oregon has moved to a state-based system of education finance. The Oregon Department of Education has a critical leadership role to play in the education reform effort. The next Chapter of this report details MAP's findings concerning how ODE has performed in carrying out this important work.

Chapter 3

FINDINGS

This chapter displays the findings from this evaluation study. These are the data-driven conclusions at which MAP arrived after reviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing all of the collected information on the Oregon Department of Education. The findings are divided into five categories: 1) leadership, 2) monitoring and enforcement, 3) capacity building, 4) research and analysis, and 5) communication.

Prior to offering the findings, MAP wishes to make two points which we believe readers must bear in mind. The first is that we were impressed with just how hard ODE employees work and how dedicated they are to doing their jobs well. Often in evaluations of state agencies, we encounter employees who are "just getting by," putting in the hours, but not committed to the work. This is not the case at the Oregon Department of Education. Staff members, regardless of their title or job description, are working hard to accomplish very difficult tasks. That leads to the second point.

What Oregon is attempting to do – implement a standards-based system of education – is enormously complex. This point cannot be stressed too forcefully or too often. No state has yet completely implemented the kinds of education reforms underway in Oregon. Policy makers, citizens, educators, and ODE employees themselves should not underestimate just how hard the work is or how long it will take to "get it right."

A final reader's caveat: Some of the findings in this chapter may sound a bit harsh. They are not meant to be that at all. Findings are offered in the spirit of assisting ODE successfully to accomplish the work before it. We hope readers – and ODE staff – will take them in the spirit in which they are offered.

We turn now to the first category of findings – leadership.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is often a rather ineffable quality, sometimes difficult precisely to define. Yet we all know leadership when we see it. In other words, the product of leadership frequently is more apparent than its performance.

For purposes of this study, MAP has defined leadership as articulating and promoting a common vision of education, a common set of goals and expectations, and means by which those expectations can be met. Neither prescriptive legislation nor sophisticated management procedures and techniques can sufficiently compensate for inadequate leadership.

Leadership for education needs to be exercised at multiple levels and by many offices, organizations, and individuals. The governor has an opportunity to display leadership through public pronouncements (the often underestimated "bully pulpit") and budget priorities. Legislative leadership comes through in the kinds of statutes approved (the "what" of education improvement) and the commitment to a sometimes rocky, but ultimately productive, course of action. The state board of education and various interested groups of citizens and professional educators have opportunities for important leadership roles as well.

Then, of course, there is the leadership it is incumbent on ODE to exercise. In this particular period, when education improvement is so high on the public, and often the political, agenda, ODE must be able to exert leadership through influence and example, incentive and exhortation, rewards and consequences. ODE must put forth a clear and consistent message about what education improvement means, how it will be accomplished, and the consequences for failing to make forward progress. The Oregon Department of Education must, in short, be the continual catalyst for improving teaching and learning.

FINDING # 1:

ODE employees, while dedicated and hardworking, do not perceive themselves as having an important role in improving teaching and learning.

In interviews and visits to various ODE offices, MAP was continually struck by how hard people are working. There is a level of dedication to the job that seems able to overcome whatever natural frustrations go hand-in-hand with trying to chart new territory.

This ethic of hard work and determination is communicated by ODE staff to educators in ESDs and local school districts. On the survey conducted for this study, when administrators were asked to name positive qualities of ODE, "good people, personable, helpful, dedicated" and "competent and professional" staff were the most frequently volunteered responses.

However, process – understanding laws, ensuring compliance with the letter of the law, planning for various kinds of activities, and developing new programs, for example – too often takes precedence over results. To illustrate: MAP presented top ODE managers with a hypothetical scenario. Suppose that there was a significant decline in reading scores statewide. What, MAP asked, should ODE do?

Virtually all of the ODE staff with whom we discussed this agreed that it was ODE's responsibility to report the decline in test scores. But, they then asserted, the *responsibility* for decline in performance – and the responsibility for improvement – would rest solely on the shoulders of local educators. ODE, they said, could not be held accountable for student performance. One high level ODE manager told MAP, "It is not our job to make sure that scores are going up." Another declared, "The department [ODE] has nothing to do if test scores are not up to standard. It would require legislation [for ODE to take action]."

This last statement is perhaps the boldest example of an ODE misconception. On the one hand, the Oregon Department of Education has the responsibility to implement the reform law enacted by the legislature. On the other, ODE has so narrowly construed and so literally interpreted the language of the statute that the agency has actually handcuffed itself.

ODE seems unable to see beyond a strict legal, point-by-point interpretation of a very complex and encompassing law. The agency seems not to understand that within the rather broad parameters of the statute, ODE must articulate the vision for reform, and initiate a coherent set of strategies designed to bring it to fruition.

When MAP would question ODE officials about what they were about and why, the most frequently offered response was, "because it's in the law." In short, ODE seems not to have grasped that the reform statute provides only the basic blue line drawings for education improvement. ODE must transform those drawings into an actual structure.

In probing a little more deeply and discussing specific strategies ODE might employ to focus on improving teaching and learning, MAP again turned to the issue of testing. Assessing student achievement is, in MAP's judgment, one of the most powerful tools ODE has at its disposal.

ODE managers were asked which best describes statewide student assessments: Are assessments a thermometer or a lever? Responses were consistent: assessments are a thermometer. They are, in other words, say ODE officials, a means of reporting a score and accomplishing a legislative mandate. Assessments are not seen as a tool for education improvement, an indicator of where and how ODE might target personnel and resources to ensure that where scores are high (or climbing), districts and schools have encouragement and incentives to keep up the good work, and where they are low, districts and schools have support and assistance to bring about improvement.

This is a particularly important point. Assessments are not merely an analytical tool. They are a key means by which to send a message about the kinds of learning standards that are expected and required.

MAP also found that almost none of the ODE managers and employees interviewed was able to articulate a coherent vision about how schools in Oregon should change to meet the state-established student achievement standards. Among those who offered an opinion there was no obvious agreement. ODE staff jobs were defined by laws and there was no responsibility for interpretation or room for initiative.

MAP believes that it is ODE's legal compliance view of education reform that is holding back additional progress ODE – and schools and districts – might be making. MAP certainly does not advocate that ODE violate the law. Rather, we are concerned that in its devotion to the letter of the law, the spirit of the statute – and the best opportunities for improving education – may be out of ODE's line of sight.

The imperative for ODE staff to devote their time and attention to matters of teaching and learning is growing ever stronger. We are convinced that, as matters now stand, large numbers of Oregon students will not achieve the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) on schedule. Yet ODE seems to have no contingency plan for this eventuality. Here is an instance in which ODE leadership is essential if the State wants to ensure that education reform is not entirely derailed.

FINDING # 2:

ODE's current organizational structure neither conveys nor facilitates an activist leadership role in improving teaching and learning.

Currently, two deputy superintendents and seven assistant or associate superintendents report directly to the superintendent. Only one associate superintendent reports through a deputy. The organizational units reporting to the superintendent are Special Education; Professional Technical Education; Student Services; Compensatory Education; Curriculum, Instruction, and Field Services; Assessment; State Board Relations; and Education Support Services. Also listed on the ODE organization chart are Drug and Alcohol Education, Teen Parent Program, Homeless Program, and Diversity Program. Conspicuous by their absence are curriculum areas such as reading, mathematics, history, science, and English.

The organization of ODE reflects a preoccupation with programs and activities, many of which are either funded through categorical grants (and often in departments of education set up as nearly freestanding entities) or are generic in nature (Student Services, for example). We do not mean to suggest that these programs and activities do not have educational value; all probably do. The problem is that the organizational structure does not telegraph a clear departmental mission, a focus on the essentials of education – how teachers teach and what and how students learn. Assessment is given equal organizational weight as special education; the specific subject areas that form the core of the assessment system are nowhere to be found.

We want to give some special attention here to the issue of subject matter experts. In our judgment, experts in the fields that are the central focus of the State's assessment efforts are an essential component of ODE

staff. We do not mean to suggest here that these individuals should alone occupy the ground in a particular field. Quite to the contrary, ODE subject matter experts should be the liaisons to other organizations, such as curriculum associations, and promote and coordinate professional development in their particular field.

ODE currently has only a part-time science expert on staff and a mathematics position which has remained unfilled since June of 1996. MAP is aware that some ODE officials believe that they were required by the 1995 amendments to the Educational Act for the 21st Century to eliminate subject matter specialists from ODE positions. Yet the 1995 amendments, properly, do not speak to the organization of ODE.

What did happen was that ODE was required (again) to reduce its budget, and made a decision to reassign its eight subject matter specialists to more generic positions, and then not to replace those specialists who retired. ODE found itself between the proverbial rock and hard place. It had been experiencing progressively reduced resources (Curriculum, Instruction, and Field Services, for example, has had its staffing cut by nearly 40 percent since 1990) at the same time as it was being called upon to carry out a whole new, and quite complex, set of responsibilities. The choice ODE made was to abandon subject matter expertise. As will be clear in the recommendations section of this report, MAP believes this is a choice that must be reconsidered.

Creating a coherent vision for reform and implementing a common and coherent strategy to achieve it requires constant communication by ODE staff within and across organizational units. Yet interviews with ODE managers and employees reveal a consistent theme of insufficient communication among and between program units. Interview results suggest a strong tendency within ODE to compartmentalize work.

Specialists in the Assessment Office, for example, describe their communication with CDE's few curriculum specialists as episodic and difficult, in large measure because the curriculum specialists have responsibilities beyond curriculum leadership and spend considerable time out of the office. Even in instances in which management reports joint collaboration, follow-up interviews revealed that this was more serendipitous than systematic, sometimes more desired than real. The head of one office, for example, described close collaboration between specialists in that office and staff of another office. Follow-up interviews with specialists in both offices revealed that, while there was a strong interest in collaboration, the workload of each office precluded it.

FINDING # 3:

Current conditions preclude CDE from securing as employees the broad range of educational experts necessary to carry out the requirements of education reform.

The challenge to attract leaders and experts to CDE jobs is compounded by the fact that salaries for education professionals at CDE lag significantly behind those in Oregon school districts. A comparison of CDE and school district salaries is displayed below:

Average salaries in Oregon districts with 1000+ ADM

Position	Salary
Deputy and Area Superintendents	$88,431
Assistant Superintendents	$74,839
High School Principals	$70,340
Elementary Principals	$62,305
Teacher with MA+45 units	$47,737*

*median of 190 days per year

Source: OSBA Salary Survey

Top of salary schedule for CEIS (year round employment)

Position	Salary
Deputy Superintendent	$79,332
Assistant Superintendent	$62,784
Specialists	$52,956

Source: CREA Salary Survey

These differences are even more dramatic when compared to Oregon's largest districts, those with more than 10,000 ADM, where salaries are even higher.

The last general salary increase for CEIS employees occurred in 1991. Since then, salaries have been static, and the gap between district and school salaries and those for CEIS employees has grown.

As a stark example that CEIS is not competitive in the job market, it is interesting to note that local school districts often have good people away from CEIS, not vice versa as is usually the case. Moreover, given the range across the state in terms of teachers' salaries (a teacher at the top of the schedule in Bend earns $42,123, in Portland $46,491, and in Beaverton $42,738), CEIS will be most able to recruit inexperienced teachers from rural areas who, while dedicated and committed, are unlikely to have worked in large organizations or with complex institutional change.

This situation regarding CEIS's competitiveness in the job market is particularly acute in positions requiring technical expertise. CEIS's highly regarded assessment manager recently left for a higher paying job. As previously indicated, CEIS has been unable to fill a mathematics position since June 6, 1998.

"Low salaries" at CDE employees is cited as a problem in interviews of school district, ESD, and higher education representatives. CDE personnel officers and managers report a significant decline in the number of candidates for advertised CDE positions and a perceived "lower quality" of the candidate pool. Fewer candidates, they say, possess the training and experience the jobs require. Many lack direct K-12 experience, and among those who do have K-12 experience, many come to CDE directly from the classroom, with little managerial or leadership experience that would give them the broader perspective needed for their statewide roles. CDE personnel officials also report that lower job seekers are from urban and suburban districts.

It may reasonably be claimed that CDE would pay more for staff if it had more dollars available. Thus, in an effort to determine the State's level of effort, as measured by dollars spent toward CDE, MAP compared Oregon with six states of comparable size. The comparison states -- three somewhat smaller than Oregon and three somewhat larger -- were Kansas, New Mexico, South Carolina, Kentucky, Connecticut, and West Virginia. The average enrollment in these states is 696,881 students, as compared to Oregon's 561,711. Results of this comparison reveal that the average cost per pupil associated with operating the state education agency in the comparison states is $89.65. In Oregon, the average cost per pupil is $61.15, slightly more than $9 per pupil below the average of the comparison states. If CDE were funded at the average of this group, its annual budget would be approximately $6 million larger.

While these figures do not necessarily mean that CDE is underfunded (at least not seriously, relative to other state education agencies), it is also clear that CDE is not over-funded. Moreover, the heavy responsibilities of CDE to implement a very complex set of education reforms must also be considered part of the funding mix.

MAP is aware that ODE salaries are subject to state laws and policies of the Department of Administrative Services and, for non-managerial employees, collective bargaining. Our review of applicable statutes reveals a strong interest in maximizing diversity in the workforce and minimizing job classifications and salary differentials for equally valued work. (See, for example, ORS 240.190, 240.215, 292.971, and state policy 20.000.01). ODE specialists are part of the same bargaining unit as most other state workers. Because they are a very small part of the bargaining unit, their interests rarely are specifically represented in negotiations. Problems notwithstanding, there are procedures available that could address gross disparities between ODE salaries and those in school districts, but they have not been employed.

FINDING # 4:

ODE does not systematically employ comprehensive planning and budgeting as management tools.

Based on interviews with ODE managers and employees, MAP concludes that planning at ODE is episodic and ad hoc. To be sure, priority activities are planned. However, priorities are something of a moving target, and tend to proliferate. This may be the natural consequence of a rapidly shifting social and political environment. What seems to be lacking, however, is an annual "baseline" from which reasoned deviations might be made.

In addition, ODE managers reported to MAP that they have little responsibility for managing their own budgets and, in fact, most display little knowledge of, for example, the remaining balance of their budgets for which they are, at least ostensibly, responsible. Managers assert that there are no consequences for overspending on their budgets, so this is a matter

to which they pay little attention. The Superintendent confirmed that nearly all budget decisions are made by her office.

FINDING # 5:

Few statutory changes are required for ODE more effectively to take a leadership role in improving teaching and learning in the state.

Most of the changes MAP will recommend to enhance ODE's effectiveness on the dimensions of improving teaching and learning can be accomplished through altered management or administrative structures. This is not a case in which serious legislative intervention is either necessary or warranted.

In fact, MAP is loath to tamper much with statute. In our judgment and based on our experience, laws should be lean and generally not prescriptive. Detailing processes and procedures in law leads inevitably to disappointing results. Laws cannot anticipate every eventuality, encompass every circumstance, or make provision for every occurrence. Laws governing an agency, such as ODE, should provide a basic set of operating guidelines, policy maker expectations, and citizen safeguards.

MAP's criterion in assessing whether or not sections of education code should be added or subtracted was a simple one: Does a law interfere with ODE's primary mission of improving teaching and learning or, alternatively, is a statute required to enhance ODE's opportunity to accomplish its primary mission?

On the latter count, whether new laws are needed, we come down firmly on the "no" side. Current statutes adequately offer ODE opportunity and flexibility to provide leadership to improve teaching and learning in Oregon districts and schools.

We make special reference here to two existing sections of law which we believe should be changed. The first is the requirement that ODE conduct school improvement visits to every district in the State on a staggered three-year timetable (ORS 329.085). In our judgment, these visits divert too much ODE staff time from necessary functions and have too little payoff for them to be continued in their present form. (See the chapter section on Monitoring and Enforcement for a more complete description of this issue.) We would recommend that the statute on school improvement visits be eliminated, or at least substantially modified.

Second, we believe that the law which requires ODE to administer the criminal background checks for all noncertified school employees (ORS 326.603) (actually, to do the requisite paperwork; the check is conducted by the state police) places an unnecessary burden on ODE. As detailed later in this report, we believe that this responsibility can be removed from ODE's jurisdiction, thus freeing ODE staff for other duties. Finally, as described in the next finding and in the recommendations section of this report, MAP believes that the current situation of an elected state superintendent is problematic. Changing this will require legal or electoral action.

FINDING # 6:

The elected office of superintendent of public instruction tends to fragment responsibility for education.

The Oregon Constitution at present requires that the state superintendent be elected. Yet, an elected chief state school officer fragments responsibility for education. The superintendent is responsible for providing programmatic leadership, while the governor is responsible for the state budget. This arrangement tends to relieve both the superintendent and the governor from total responsibility to the citizens of

Oregon. The superintendent can claim that schools fail to perform because of inadequate funding and the governor can point to inadequate programmatic leadership. This situation can be exacerbated when each office holder is a member of a different political party or when the governor and the superintendent hold highly divergent philosophical views about education.[2]

Environmental changes have added some urgency to the need to streamline governance arrangements and establish clearer lines of authority. In particular, the greater state role in financing schools creates a fiduciary responsibility on the part of the State to account for the way in which dollars are spent. The governor and the legislature currently are the responsible parties. The superintendent, though an elected constitutional officer and head of the agency responsible for implementing the State's complex reform statute, has quite limited budgetary authority. Dollars are appropriated to ODE functions, but in many instances, ODE simply acts as a "pass through" to local school districts. The real authority for determining levels of funding resides with the governor and legislature.

A different arrangement, detailed in the Recommendations chapter of this report, would both provide a formal link to the policy makers who control state dollars, and would provide an opportunity reasonably to ensure for the future that the State's chief school official can both work effectively with the State's chief executive officer and has the requisite background, expertise, and training to carry out a critical State function.

MAP points out here that the discussion of an appointed superintendent falls in the "good government" realm. There is currently no crisis in Oregon on this dimension. However, diffuse responsibility for education,

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[2] Neither of these conditions seems to prevail in Oregon at present, but both are possible under the current arrangement.

as is now the case, seems inconsistent with the State's taste for accountability.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

Monitoring and enforcement conventionally implies ensuring that some set of laws, rules, and regulations is adhered to appropriately. For state departments of education, this task historically meant making sure that districts and schools hewed faithfully to the various statutes promulgated by the state and federal branches of government. For modern state education departments, however, in other words, for those that are evolving new roles more consonant with the obligations of systemic education reform, "monitoring and enforcement" must take on a new meaning. Increasingly, departments of education must translate the "follow the rules" sense of monitoring and enforcement to ensuring that districts and schools successfully implement more effective teaching and learning. Departments of education then monitor and enforce the extent to which these efforts are successful; in other words, the extent to which new student achievement standards are being met.

FINDING #7:

ODE has undertaken efforts to transform itself from a regulatory organization to a school assistance organization. However, despite its efforts to move from regulation to assistance, ODE continues to conduct most of its work as if it were primarily a regulatory and compliance organization.

Interviews of ODE employees reveal a strong desire to move away from conventional monitoring and compliance activities and toward greater assistance to schools and districts in improving teaching and learning. The Superintendent and her staff are to be commended on the changes they have made, for example, to focus more on technical assistance to schools and districts.

Clearly ODE leadership is endeavoring to refocus the primary manifestation of the enforcement norm, the School Improvement Visits, away from compliance and toward assistance. Oregon law requires that every three years the State Board of Education or its "designee" (read: ODE) assess the effectiveness of each public school district in an on-site visit. These school improvement visits, as they are called, replace the former standardization visits.

Previously, the visits' sole purpose was to provide on-site verification that the district was maintaining adequate records of compliance with state regulations and meeting other requirements designed to protect students' health and safety. Now these visits also are meant to determine whether a district's school improvement plan, and individual schools' school improvement plans, are likely to be effective in achieving state curriculum goals and standards.

Respondents to the MAP survey conducted for this study clearly are aware of this change. They report that their site visit discussions with ODE officials recently have focused, to at least some extent, on standards and the degree to which their students are meeting them.

However, accumulated evidence from MAP's review of documents, interviews with ODE administrators and school district personnel, and observations suggests that ODE personnel still spend too much of their time on regulation and compliance and too little on assisting districts and schools to improve teaching and learning.

The evidence for this finding comes from several sources. Much of the problem stems directly from statutes and the Oregon Administrative Rules that direct ODE to enforce specific policies. Let us turn again to the school improvement visits.

ODE is required by law to make school improvement visits to each school district every three years. While we found general compliance with

this requirement, MAP was informed by ODE managers that ODE would not conduct visits to the required one-third of districts in the current year and was seeking legislation to relax that requirement to one-quarter annually. A more fundamental question raised by the visits is whether this is an effective use of ODE's limited resources.

School improvement visits consume, according to ODE sources, approximately 1250 professional days of ODE personnel each year. A typical visit involves on average eight ODE staff members spending two days visiting the district office and various schools in the district. In addition, the team leader and assistant leader make a previsit to review district documents and establish a schedule for the main visit. After the visit, the team prepares a report that must be given to the district within six months.

The amount of time spent by school district and school personnel in preparing self-studies in anticipation of the school improvement visits is considerable as well. The majority of administrators interviewed by MAP did not believe this to be an efficient or effective use of their time.

School improvement visiting teams are also to provide technical assistance to schools and districts, as requested. However, ODE staff who are available on a scheduled visit day compose the ODE teams. Staff skills and expertise are not necessarily matched to district or school needs. (On a school improvement visit attended by MAP, for example, a bilingual specialist whose particular expertise was not required at the school was dispatched to review the process for dispensing drugs in the nurse's office.) In the absence of ability to provide particular assistance on a given topic (reading improvement, for example) the teams understandably resort to compliance checks -- how the nurses supply cabinet is stocked, whether fire drill directions are clearly posted, etc.

MAP's general observation is that school improvement visits are enormously time consuming for ODE personnel and the purpose of the visit is not well understood by district personnel or ODE visiting teams. Moreover, confusion still reigns regarding whether these visits are designed to enforce legal compliance or facilitate school improvement and if the former, how that is to be achieved.

ODE is also required by law to administer the criminal background checks procedure for all noncertified school employees. The actual checks are made by the state police, but the processing of the paperwork takes the full-time involvement of several ODE employees. While ODE is apparently in compliance with the statutes requiring this activity, this is another example of the kind of required administrative duty that consumes an inordinate proportion of ODE time. It is not surprising therefore to find that the ODE is organized around these administrative functions. Personnel are assigned to monitor and enforce specific programs rather than to achieve major educational goals.

Interviews with ODE administrators reveal the depth with which compliance issues dominate their thinking. They will talk about being service oriented and providing technical assistance to school districts, but when asked why certain things are done, they often say because the law or a rule requires it. There is little connection made between education goals, a vision of reform, and a coherent strategy to move from status quo to higher standards of achievement on the one hand, and activities in which ODE personnel are engaged on the other.

We discovered that reports sent to ODE are often ignored or seldom used. For example, every school district is required to submit to ODE by January 1 a document entitled, "Annual Report on Compliance with Minimum Standards." When one division director was asked how the extensive amount of information in the report was used the individual

claimed no knowledge of the report. Much compliance work continues because it is required, not because it is useful.

At the same time, most school administrators and teachers have little direct contact with ODE personnel. Not one school principal or teacher we talked with knew the name of, or had ever had contact with, ODE's official liaison person for schools in their region. Most administrators felt that ODE is too distant from actual school operations to be of much help to them.

The perception that ODE is too rule-bound is reflected in the results of the survey conducted for this study. "Bureaucratic" is the word the majority of respondents used to describe ODE. "Creative" and "flexible" do not rank high as ODE descriptors.

When asked what role ODE plays in Oregon, the largest group (86%) responded that it acts as a referee; 37 percent said it acts like a coach. This is in stark contrast with administrators' preference that ODE be more of a coach. Eighty-nine percent preferred this role, while only 7 percent preferred the referee or spectator role. Moreover, it is important to point out that those administrators who perceive ODE as performing a coaching role are at least twice as likely to rate the performance of ODE as excellent or good than are those who view ODE as more of a referee.

When asked to say what ODE does well, respondents listed managing federal programs, enforcing state regulations, and assessing students. Less than a third of the local administrators think ODE does a good job of supporting staff development and program assistance, providing financial management assistance, and helping with local improvement efforts. In other words, ODE is perceived as doing a good job of carrying out its administrative responsibilities but a less effective job of supporting educational reform.

Why is this all important? Many of ODE's regulatory activities are not very useful (though they may currently be mandated) and consume resources needed for other important activities. It is not necessary to check that every school holds earthquake drills as required by law. That responsibility could be transferred to school districts, or a small sample of districts could be checked for compliance. Rather than assuming districts are not complying with rules, the assumption should be that they are. Procedures can then be devised to root out the few schools or districts that are derelict.

The main problem with a compliance orientation, however, is that it takes time and resources away from the more important task of assisting schools improve instruction and learning. There is so much work to do with limited resources. Ways must be found to reallocate ODE resources to the improvement of education in the State.

FINDING # 6:

ODE has instituted a statewide assessment program but may not be sufficiently positioned to take full advantage of its power to improve teaching and learning.

Given the imperative of standards-based education reform, the traditional monitoring and compliance function of State Departments of Education is shifting to an emphasis on measuring the progress of students toward agreed-on statewide academic goals. The Oregon State Assessment Program is the piece of Oregon's education reform strategy that ties higher academic standards to the content and performance standards defining what students should know and be able to do in the areas of English Language Arts, mathematics, science, the social studies (history, geography, economics, and civics), the arts, and a second language. Developing good assessments - tests that are fair, reliable, valid and which

send the right signals to the field – is a complicated, and at certain of these subject areas on a statewide scale, pioneering endeavor. Lack of resources and the increasing time pressure to "get it finished" can be a recipe for disaster. Oregon, so far, has avoided some of the worst pitfalls.

CEE officials responsible for assessment have done a commendable job of beginning to develop a statewide assessment program. Amendments to the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century made by the 1991 Legislative Assembly changed the purpose of the statewide assessment to focus on determining if students have met the standards established for the Certificate of Initial Mastery at approximately grade 10. Benchmark assessments at grades 3, 5, and 8 are to be used to determine if students are making appropriate progress towards achieving the CIM on schedule. Then far, criterion-referenced multiple choice and/or open-ended tests have been put in place at the various developmental levels in reading, writing, and mathematics and have been well received. For example, public school administrators and principals in the NWP survey gave CEE good marks for its performance in the area thus far. The writing test, in particular, has had a marked positive impact on the amount and quality of writing being done by Oregon students. CEE staff told us that the scoring rubric for writing is frequently in evidence in the classrooms they visit around the State.

Statewide assessments are currently under development in science and social studies. Local districts are to identify the assessments and standards for acceptable performance in second language and the arts. Requirements for Health and Physical Education are described in Oregon's Essential Learning Skills and Common Curriculum Goals but are not the subject of statewide testing.

Much work remains, in short, and there are reasons for caution. Some of the subject matter associations are not confident that assessments in their

fields properly will measure what students should know and be able to do. There is a danger that if assessments are designed to be executed "on the cheap," they will not be appropriately aligned with the curriculum; in other words, they will not measure (and therefore, not encourage teachers to emphasize learning) the knowledge and skills needed to carry out complex tasks. In science, for example, CDE has decided not to include a hands-on lab test in the statewide assessment and may not include an open-ended instrument. However, the consensus of science educators is that hands-on learning is essential for helping students to start thinking scientifically. If students are not tested for competency in experimental design and concrete problem-solving, would it be surprising if many science courses in the state continue to not offer these kinds of experiences to students?

The point is, statewide assessment is an extremely powerful tool for influencing what happens at the classroom level, but it is also a two-edged sword. Good assessments will support the goals of education reform just as bad assessments will undermine them. There is a prime opportunity for CDE to exercise leadership -- to be sure that state policy makers understand that adequate resources are necessary to develop tests and that they are apprised of the level of resources that are on-going, effective, statewide assessment programs will require; to acquaint administrators and teachers with the nature of the assessments; and to provide in-depth professional development for teachers so that they can prepare their students to achieve at high levels. In addition, CDE has a continuing responsibility to help the public understand what these tests are, and what the scores mean.

WWF found little evidence that CDE is prepared to ensure these various roles. Of course, there will always be a tension between the quality of statewide assessments and the cost of administering them (extrapolated by CDE at around $6 million per year by 2001 when the changes have

Assessment Program is fully in place). Unfortunately, the finding already alluded to that CEIS managers and staff are more likely to think of assessment as a thermometer for sampling student performance rather than a lever for influencing the quality of teaching and learning at the classroom level suggests a fundamental lack of understanding of the dynamics of education reform and does not inspire confidence in CEIS's capacity to lead in this area.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Implementing the complex changes implicit in the Educational Act for the 21st Century requires a tremendous investment on the part of the state in equipping local districts and schools to improve teaching and learning. What is called for in Oregon's reform statute are new ways of conducting education's business – higher standards, new kinds of curricula, new teaching methods, new forms of assessment to measure progress, and, of course, greater expected levels of student achievement.

Achieving the primary goal – increased student achievement – is not a matter of simply telling districts or schools to pay more attention or teachers to work harder. This is not an instance in which the "bully pulpit" serves education well.

Districts and schools, and teachers in the classrooms, are working at capacity now. The challenge is to assist districts and schools to organize differently, behave differently, and then set their sights even higher. Their efforts must be geared around the State's expressed vision for education, and they must be offered adequate support and assistance so they can meet the expectations established for them. What we are talking about here is what classically is called professional development. Professional development often has a bad reputation among teachers – and deservedly so. National studies have shown that offerings tend to be only loosely related, if at all, to teachers' expressed needs or professional responsibilities. Staff development tends to consist of structured courses which frequently are offered on "tired time" after teachers have taught all day. Programs are organized in one-shot sessions, and financial investment is generally low.

Literature on professional development suggests that effective efforts

- stimulate and support site-based initiatives; in other words, are closely linked to school efforts to improve teaching practice;
- support district, school, *and* teacher initiatives;
- are structured around the knowledge base of teaching;
- offers opportunities for teachers to broaden and deepen their subject matter knowledge;
- offer teachers opportunities to be active learners; in other words to explore, question, and debate new ideas in order to integrate them into their teaching repertoires and classroom practice;
- provide adequate time and follow-up support for teachers to master new strategies and content and integrate them into their practice; and,
- are accessible and inclusive, available to all as a valued part of teachers' work. (Corcoran, 1994)

The goal of this sort of ongoing professional development is to build the capacity of teachers, and of schools and districts, to be self-renewing learning organizations that constantly seek out new knowledge and appraise and revise professional practice based on research and experience.

ODE has an essential role to play in this capacity building endeavor as a partner with districts, schools, and teachers. To be sure, there are other forms that state-offered technical assistance might take (for example, assisting districts with financial management matters and removing unnecessary regulatory or bureaucratic impediments), but it is in this capacity building arena that the biggest payoff is possible.

FINDING # 9:

Many key ODE staff members convey an understanding of the importance of providing ongoing assistance to districts and schools. However, ODE has no apparent comprehensive plan for building local school and district capacity through ODE-proffered technical assistance.

From interviews with ODE staff members, reviews of ODE documents, and reports of speeches by ODE officials, it is clear that key ODE staff understand how critical reform-related "technical assistance" for districts and schools is to Oregon's education improvement effort. Developing a consciousness about the need for ongoing professional development is a critical component of assisting districts and schools to build capacity for change.

The Superintendent, in her address to the State Board of Education outlining ODE's major goals for 1995-97 stated: "Staff development must become a systematic and collaborative effort with school boards, administrators, and teachers. We need to work with teachers and cooperatively plan to use staff training time in a focused way to bring about school improvement."

Oregon's Goals 2000 plan, written by ODE to secure federal dollars, refers several times to "bottom up" reform, noting that, "change must emerge from the school site ... and should be based on professional knowledge and a solid foundation of research."

ODE's 1995-97 Legislatively Adopted Budget document declares, "Department staff will provide necessary technical assistance and staff development for schools so that they may reach individual school improvement goals" (emphasis added), and, "The Department of Education will become a clearinghouse for dissemination of research findings through an interactive network to communicate with schools..."

These are illustrative examples which demonstrate that ODE is aware of the need for assistance to schools and districts, can speak knowledgeably about the goal of technical assistance efforts ("so that schools may reach individual school improvement goals"), and understands that ODE cannot, on its own, offer the kind of sustained professional development required for education reform (ODE "... will become a clearinghouse").

However, here is a clear case in which actions really do speak louder than words. The "actions" – the kinds of assistance provided by ODE to districts and schools – often belie both written descriptions and public pronouncements by ODE officials. Interviews with ODE staff confirm that "technical assistance" consists primarily of providing information about rules and administrative requirements (for example, how to complete an application for funding). Moreover, several ODE managers and specialists reported to MAP that, increasingly, this function is being performed by support staff as professional staff members' time is consumed by, for example, school improvement visits.

When asked about a strategic plan for professional development, ODE staff insisted that such a plan exists. Several times MAP requested a copy of this plan. On October 30, 1998, one was faxed to us.

The plan (at least as it existed at that time) is five pages in length and sketchy, at best. It does, in a rather veiled way, endeavor to link state-driven professional development efforts with state education reform efforts. The document states that the objective of the plan (the plan is actually labeled a "systems framework") is to "... guide ODE in providing professional development to schools and districts implementing high content and performance standards as part of district school improvement and consolidated state plans."

This language is confusing. One would assume that all schools in the state are implementing "high content and performance standards" so that is

the crux of the Educational Act for the 21st Century. There is in the document, however, no explicit reference to the reform law.

The document consists of a set of "action plans" geared around developing "cross-agency work groups to design professional development efforts," "utilizing research-based best practice…," "provid[ing] a systemic improvement model for professional development," and "creat[ing] professional development calendars…" The columns of the plan labeled "resources needed," "assigned to," "target date," and "evidence" are all blank.

Perhaps this an evolving plan of recent vintage. But MAP's efforts to obtain any previous plan that might be displaced by this one were in vain. CDE's efforts to develop a systemic vision for professional development were perhaps best summed up by the leader of a curriculum association who told us, "If CDE has a strategic plan, I'd love to know what it is."

To broaden its assistance reach, CDE has established a network of regional representatives, CDE employees who are assigned to work with districts and schools in a designated sector of the State. MAP discovered, however, that regional representatives do not have a clear conception of their role. They do not see themselves, for example, as cooperating with districts and schools to build local capacity toward achieving school improvement goals. Regional representatives do not have a sense of mission to guide them to take initiative to motivate or lead local efforts to enhance capacity.

The regional representatives with whom MAP spoke describe their role as "being helpful." They seem to view themselves as general purpose problem solvers who respond to local requests. They, too, describe technical assistance primarily as advice on completing applications and interpretations of laws and regulations.

Over the next several months (until July 1, 1997) a focus of OEE technical assistance is assisting districts to complete their Consolidated District Improvement Plans (CDIP). Here, we believe, is an opportunity missed. A CDIP is a worthy idea. It offers districts a way to think coherently and cohesively about the kinds of coordinated efforts they will engage in to enhance student learning. At least that is the theory. Practice is a little different.

OEE's specifications for the CDIPs are that districts should, or should assist schools to: 1) collect and analyze relevant data about, for example, student demographics and student performance; 2) establish measurable school-based goals; 3) develop "action plans" consisting of strategies and activities designed to improve student learning; and 4) develop an evaluation design, including indicators to be used to assess student progress.

Here is a perfect opportunity for OEE to use this tool, the CDIP, as a means to help build local capacity -- to assist districts and schools to develop plans based on the State's vision for education reform, help schools identify strategies based on "best practices" and tailor those strategies to the needs of individual schools, and link schools and districts with appropriate assistance so that the plan becomes a living, breathing, working document. Instead, OEE attention is directed toward ensuring that districts complete the paperwork properly. The hard task is not to write a plan; districts are well practiced at this activity. The difficult part is converting a locally generated plan to the State's education improvement vision and strategies. One wonders, for example, why there is no mention in the CDIP of Oregon's new student assessments.

ODE generally is not viewed as a resource by districts and schools.

ODE is not perceived by district or school officials as providing adequate assistance to help them to ensure that students meet the achievement standards established by the state. When asked, on the MAP-administered survey, whether ODE is "a resource there for us to use," only 15 percent each of district administrators and school principals replied "yes." Administrators from small and rural districts, in particular, regard ODE as "marginal, has little impact on the quality of education."

Moreover, "improving local capacity" is not viewed by ESD and district administrators as a high priority for ODE. Less than a third of survey respondents (31%) gave ODE a rating of does "well" or "fairly well" on this dimension.

Here a district size split is evident. Administrators from the largest districts (10,000 or more students) and the smallest districts (fewer than 1,000 students) rate ODE higher than do other administrators on the developing local capacity dimension. Majorities of administrators in the largest and smallest districts believe ODE makes this issue a major priority.

Neither ESN nor district level administrators believe that ODE places a premium on providing professional development opportunities. When asked if "organizing and providing staff development opportunities and programs" is a major or a minor priority for ODE, more than half of ESD superintendents (55%), nearly two-thirds of administrators in large districts (63%), and nearly half of administrators in small districts (49%) say ODE views it as a minor priority. It should be noted that administrators from districts with fewer than 1,000 students think ODE does more in the way of organizing and providing staff development opportunities. Nearly half

[illegible] say that is a major CIDE priority, and more than half [illegible] say CIDE does a fairly or very good job of it.

[illegible] we refer the reader back to our earlier discussion of leadership. Districts believe they are more or less "on their own" when it comes to equipping teachers and administrators to meet the State's new education expectations. Those expectations and reality, as we have previously indicated, are about to crash headlong into each other.

Local administrators know large numbers of students will not score well on the new assessment, at least in the test's initial years.[1] They are fearful that the "blame" for students not achieving at the newly established levels will be laid solely at their doorsteps. On several visits to Oregon during the course of this study, we were regaled with the story of how when mathematics scores on the pilot assessment did not reach the then-anticipated board-established level, administrators and teachers were publicly taken to task by CIDE officials – another example of CIDE's "We just report, but we're not responsible" philosophy.

To be sure, CIDE does make a token effort to provide technical assistance within specific subject areas. For example, in a 15-page tabloid mailed to every teacher and administrator in the state in January, 1997 CIDE described the programmatic elements of the reform and invited anyone with questions to call particular specialists named as "curriculum contacts" in English/language arts, second language, science, social sciences and mathematics. Simulating the experience of a teacher following up on this advice, NWF attempted to reach each of these individuals via telephone. All were out of the office or otherwise unavailable and, in fact, we established contact with only one within the first week of trading phone

[1] Key to [illegible] success: Oregon's assessment is a zero-sum kind of test, interpreting higher standards of achievement. It is to be expected that student scores will rise, as teachers, for better or for

calls. The press of other duties made it virtually impossible for CEE's "curriculum contacts" to function effectively in that role.

CEE also appears to have no contingency plan in place to assist districts and schools whose students do not perform well on the new assessment. Districts and schools would welcome CEE's assistance, but they have little confidence it will be forthcoming.

There are other dimensions of "technical assistance" for which CEE might reasonably be held responsible (though, in MAP's judgment, none is as important as the capacity building function). However, when we look at the way in which local educators view CEE on, for example, the dimension of assisting districts with financial management, CEE does not receive exemplary marks. ESD and district administrators do not believe CEE assigns a high priority to this function, nor do they believe that financial management assistance is something CEE does very well.

FINDING #10:

Oregon's ESDs, subject matter associations, universities, and other institutions represent vastly underutilized resources available to CEE.

A number of organizations, institutions, and agencies in Oregon are well positioned to assist CEE in its technical assistance-capacity building function. ESDs, colleges and universities, the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, and many local school districts represent a surplus lode of staff development resources.

We focus in this finding specifically on the curriculum associations. It is these organizations in particular that can buttress a previously identified weakness in CEE's current structure, namely insufficient subject matter expertise.

NWP interviewed 27 current and former leaders of the curriculum associations in the disciplines of mathematics, English/language arts, social studies, science, foreign language/ESL, vocational education, the arts, health, and physical education for this study. Locating these individuals proved to be a harder task than we had imagined.

While the Oregon School Directory, published by CIDE, maintains information about these organizations, we discovered that something was inaccurate in almost half the listings -- wrong phone number, wrong name for the individual in charge of the organization, a listing for organizations no longer in existence. While NWP recognizes the difficulty of maintaining an entirely accurate listing in a published volume, we were struck by the fact that CIDE staff were unaware that the information was not up-to-date.

When we did locate representatives for each of the organizations, all reported to NWP that they are rarely contacted by CIDE -- several complained, in fact, that try as they might, they are unable even to get on CIDE mailing lists. Here is a ready-made group of knowledgeable practitioners in each of the major subject disciplines and yet, say the representatives of the associations, they are not part of CIDE's professional development web. In fact, they say, communication with CIDE has all but broken down.

As one association representative told us, "I believe CIDE to have communication with the curriculum organizations. If they don't have it through a [department-employed] specialist, they need to figure out some other way to establish it. But I quite honestly don't understand how they [CIDE] can serve education in Oregon without having people responsible for the various curriculum areas."

[redacted]

[illegible] and collected cannot be reported, and 3) data do not necessarily speak for themselves.

[illegible]

As Oregon continues its move to a performance-based system of education, ODE's ability to analyze data will become ever more crucial. However, ODE currently possesses little capacity to maintain research and analyze data on key issues such as student achievement and school finance.

Research and analysis have historically not been responsibilities of the Oregon Department of Education. In times past, these functions may not have been critical for the agency's productive operation. When schools were locally financed, ODE had little need to equip state policy makers with data on the relative costs of various kinds of education undertakings or to simulate the costs of proposed new programs, or assess the ways in which districts allocated their dollars and the kinds of results that came from those allocations. These were responsibilities of local fiscal staff who were accountable to local school boards. With the experiment of Measure 5, all that changed in Oregon. Now, school finance is a state function and the agency responsible for the education program must play a more activist role in the arena.

Likewise, when there was no comprehensive statewide program of education reform, and no state-established standards and state-designed assessments, districts and schools largely assumed the task of analyzing and reporting local achievement scores. There were issues of consistency, or perhaps regional interest, but not a statewide policy concern.

Now the tables have been turned on this dimension as well. State policy makers understandably look to ODE for an explanation of what lowest data -- what it is, what it means, and what to do about it.

[illegible] that research and analysis have not been broadly based [illegible] functions, and given the limited resources [illegible] has a meaningful an enormous set of tasks, [illegible] is not surprised to find that [illegible] is short on research and analytic capabilities. In fact, [illegible] officials readily admit that the agency is a questionable fit for school funding processes. Realizing the need for [illegible] funding targets, in addition to the Commissioner of Oregon School Superintendent, the Oregon School Boards Association, the Oregon Education Association, and a few district superintendents. Analyses of funding requests or program costs is conducted by the Legislative Fiscal Office and the Legislative Revenue Office. While [illegible] about [illegible] allocate only, [illegible] has not assumed a more activist role in school finance, given the shift to a state-funded education system, the response typically was, "because we [illegible] have not been asked to, districts or the legislature to play a different role."

While [illegible] has the capacity to report student achievement scores, [illegible] is not equipped that [illegible] can explain what these scores might, in terms of concrete action that is required of them. For example, the state has established a minimum standard for each subject related to the Certificate of Initial Mastery, [illegible] and has declared the percent of students who will meet this standard. For mathematics, 90 percent of students are to reach a standardized test score of [illegible]. Analysis would a combination between the number and type of mathematics courses in which students enroll and the percent of students who reach the target score.

In Portland, just one percent of students who take only general mathematics scored at least [illegible] on the pilot assessment. But 15 percent of students who had taken both algebra and geometry reached that score. No number who achieve the desired score rose to 90 percent among students who had taken algebra and geometry, and 98 percent among students who had completed pre-calculus. These results would suggest that if

bankruptcy. Consistent with its position on educational program performance, ODE seems to believe that it has no responsibility in this area.

FINDING # 10:

On the increasingly important dimension of school level information, ODE's current data system is inadequate.

Policy makers, district administrators and ODE employees were consistent in their criticism of the quality of school district expenditure data collected and the ability of ODE to forecast enrollments. The current accounting rules are relatively ambiguous. When added to the level of aggregation of data reported to ODE, they make it virtually impossible to make reasoned judgments about expenditure patterns between and among local school districts. ODE collects no data, for example, that would permit analysis of school level expenditures. Until reliable school level expenditure data are collected, it will not be possible to make any useful judgments about the costs of specific interventions, let alone judgments about their cost effectiveness.

Finally, reports need to be customized for specific audiences. Legislators may be interested in how all schools are performing or how Oregon costs for assessment compare with those in similar states. District superintendents may be interested in how the performance of schools in their district compares with the performance of schools with similar student populations. Parents want to know not only what their children know and are able to do, but how their children's performance compares with what students know and are able to do in schools elsewhere in the state, country and world.

Averages rarely tell the whole story. Reports of district-wide, even school-wide, dropout rates or academic performance may mask important differences among ethnic or economic groups. Similarly, average expenditure data may mask grossly unequal expenditures between schools

within a district. ODE must be equipped to tell all of these stories accurately and completely.

FINDING #15:

ODE's current management information system is hobbled by a set of interlocking conditions that reduce the utility of the data collected.

Perhaps key to this finding is that ODE's management information system lacks a coherent philosophical underpinning. There is no agency-wide consensus on what data are needed and the uses to which these data ought to be put.

Current ODE data systems are structured in a "stovepipe" fashion, with data collected and used only by individual persons or functions within ODE. Information, in other words, is collected and stored in a manner that restricts access to those who gather it. Thus, those who receive the data become "gatekeepers" of the information. Some sharing occurs, but lack of a centralized data dictionary inhibits efficient, effective data exchange.

Moreover, the kinds of data ODE collects from districts are largely compliance-oriented information -- reports that relate, for example, to fund distribution, costs for particular categorical programs (e.g., special education), and student attendance. Various units within ODE collect data at different intervals, some monthly, others quarterly, still others annually. Sometimes ODE offices request data from districts and schools on an ad hoc basis -- a particular need arises suddenly -- without checking (or having a way to check) if these data already have been previously collected by another ODE office.

According to ODE managers, each of ODE's offices maintains data on personal computers in addition to that maintained centrally. These data are reported to be duplicative and sometimes at variance with those kept in the

ODE master database. Perhaps the most troublesome feature of the office-level databases is that only a select few individuals know precisely what these databases contain and have access to them.

There is, for example, no easy way to profile the number of special education students by handicapping condition, the costs required adequately to serve such students, the number of them requiring transportation, etc. A similar situation would be true for comparing costs of a particular program or intervention across school districts. In addition to databases which are not integrated, it was reported to SSAT that some data are collected but not catalogued, thereby rendering them inaccessible to large sectors of the ODE organization.

Finally, data are collected because they have always been collected. Data collection has not been recalibrated to take into account, and even anticipate, data needs that arise as a result of the State's larger role in financing schools and State policy makers' greater stake in student performance outcomes.

FINDING #10:

Annual audits represent an underutilized opportunity for appropriate State oversight of district expenditure patterns.

Currently, districts select and contract with local CPA firms for annual audits. Although the State Auditor sets certain standards for audits, individual audits are not standardized and school districts have little incentive to expand their scope.

Some other states make far more extensive use of the auditing function by requiring auditors to examine ongoing compliance with student attendance, compliance with various state and federal program requirements and other functions which are not strictly financial. For example, among the compliance components California school districts must address are attendance for approximately 30 programs, state incentive programs for longer school day and

year, various state and federal categorical programs, and state residency. Other states have found this practice to be a cost effective alternative to operating without necessary information or to relying on state staff to conduct special audits. Many of the compliance items which compose ODE's School Improvement Visits can be addressed in annual audits, thus freeing up scarce ODE resources for higher payoff activities.

It is important, however, for the reader to be aware that audits, regardless of how extensive, are unlikely to provide sufficiently timely information to identify school districts headed for financial insolvency.

COMMUNICATION

For an organization in the throes of implementing complex systems change, communication is critical. It is through various communication vehicles that ODE can promote the State's education reform agenda, and build consensus for standards-based school improvement.

FINDING # 17:

ODE, with limited resources, manages to communicate in multiple ways with policy makers, educators, and the public. However, ODE does not currently have a "feedback loop" which would enable it to gauge the effectiveness of communication with its various "publics."

ODE manages to produce a plethora of written documents, available to schools, to policy makers, and to the general public, designed to paint a convincing picture of education in Oregon. Moreover, ODE has made a considerable effort to strip the jargon from its publications. This has not gone unnoticed by local educators who give ODE good marks for providing "clear and well written reports, publications, and other forms of communication." (It should be noted, however, that just one third, or 33%,

of administrators in large districts of more than 6,000 students [and CDE for its communication efforts]. CDE also is quite effective securing newspaper attention for education efforts across the state.

If there are criticisms to be made of CDE's various communiqués, it is that sometimes they are not sufficiently targeted to a particular audience (parent representatives, for example, complained to MAP that they do not always get the kind of information they want) and that they usually focus on process and procedure rather than on results.

Moreover, CDE rarely asks of its various constituents, "How are we doing?" Thus, CDE must rely on anecdote and its own intuitive sense of the utility of its communications. The lack of some consistent means by which continually to check to see how CDE's message is being heard means that minor missteps that might be corrected instead have the potential to become serious problems.

Chapter 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides recommendations regarding ways in which the Oregon Department of Education might more effectively carry out its primary mission, continuous improvement of teaching and learning in the State's districts and schools. Recommendations are divided into the same categories as the findings – Leadership, Monitoring and Enforcement, Capacity Building, Research and Analysis, and Communication.

In addition to the Oregon-specific findings presented in the previous chapter, the recommendations in this chapter are derived from extensive research on educational change (Fullan, et al.). This research suggests the following six guidelines for agencies charged with responsibility for implementing complex systemic change:

1. Concentrate on increasing the capacity of other agencies to implement changes. In other words, no agency should take it solely upon itself to make change happen. Organizations need partners.
2. Be clear about what is being implemented, and devote time to ensuring that cooperating organizations understand what is meant by the change and what is expected as a result of results.
3. Have a comprehensive, but flexible, plan to guide the change process.
4. Make sure that staff in the agency primarily responsible for guiding reform (e.g., OSIP) have the opportunity to develop knowledge and competence in both the process and the substance of the changes to be implemented.
5. Focus principal attention on improving teaching and learning. Do not be distracted by other non-essential, and often easier, activities.
6. Understand that complexity and persistence go hand-in-hand. Large-scale change is never achieved quickly, easily – or without a certain amount of pain.

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[redacted]

will result in the changes in teaching and learning at local schools necessary to produce the student outcomes promised by the education reform act. Indeed, as matters stand, the opposite outcome – a failure of many students to earn the Certificate of Initial Mastery when it first becomes available – can confidently be predicted.

What, then, should OSE do? At a minimum, OSE needs to:

A. *Articulate a clear vision of what kinds of curriculum, teaching methods, and teacher knowledge are likely to produce the desired outcomes.* This vision must be developed and shared with all who have responsibility for the education improvement effort, beginning with OSE staff and managers.

B. *Develop a sophisticated understanding of the change process.* Change is very complex. It involves internalizing new beliefs and adopting new behaviors. Change only comes about when those who are expected to make the change believe that it makes sense, clearly understand what is expected, and are provided adequate resources and incentives. Those who have the task of guiding a systemic change effort, namely, OSE staff, must themselves understand what needs to change and how change can be accomplished.

C. *Develop a comprehensive, evolutionary implementation strategy.* Beginning with the vision, OSE must determine all that needs to undergo change and devise a plan to make it happen. Those who form this strategy must be well acquainted with the way in day-to-day reality of schools. They must understand the dynamics of small and large organizations (schools come in various sizes) and they must understand that curriculum is not generic. Students learn – and are assessed on – reading, mathematics, science, etc.

D. *Understand that education improvement is a team effort.* OSE staff must come to understand that responsibility for student

[redacted]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

[illegible]

[illegible] considerations of what is assessed is not specifically called for tonight. Many [illegible] assessment has been described separately. It could, however, be combined in a single unit with instruction and [illegible].

A second program [illegible] that would [illegible], however, is this unit would be [illegible]. Which programs are [illegible] "value added"? Which efforts represent promising practices that might be adopted by [illegible]? Which outstandings ought to be [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible]? These are the kinds of questions that [illegible] to [illegible].

Capacity Building — This group would be responsible for working with local educators to organize and build site-[illegible] capacity to provide [illegible] assistance for [illegible] classroom instruction. Technical assistance is often [illegible] by [illegible] would [illegible] to complete plans and [illegible] [illegible] identifying the [illegible] of a [illegible]. Instead it would be high-[illegible] assistance such as [illegible] professional development around [illegible] instruction and [illegible]. [illegible] would [illegible] capacity [illegible] in [illegible] of the nature of effective professional development.

[illegible], this group would not [illegible], these assistance however, [illegible] assigned to this unit would work with [illegible] sessions. While [illegible] professional organizations and [illegible] [illegible] to develop the capacity to deliver [illegible] to [illegible]. They would [illegible] [illegible], and would have a stake in the success of [illegible] [illegible].

At a minimum these individuals would be well versed in the theory and practice of educational change. That is, they would appreciate the complexity and difficulty of changing a system as large and diffuse as education. They would understand that change comes only as individuals, teachers, administrators and others construct meaning from the vision articulated by ODE. They would appreciate that, at best, laws are enablers of change, but are always insufficient to stand alone as agents of change. They would understand that developing a plan, no matter how elegant, is peripheral to real change; that change comes only after hard work sustained over several years.

The functions ascribed to ODE's current regional specialists are a good starting point for developing the specifications for these positions. What we have in mind here are roles that are much more entrepreneurial, more closely focused on improving instruction; in other words, initiators rather than reactors.

Special Needs Populations – Fundamental to the mission of this unit is a belief that categorical programs exist to enhance the success of eligible student populations in the regular academic program. In fact, categoricals are primarily funding sources, not programs per se. Consistent with this premise, this unit would house the policy making and administrative functions necessary to operate the various categorical programs. To the extent feasible, resources from these funding sources would be redirected to support specialists in Curriculum and Instruction and Capacity Building who would be charged with developing strategies for improving the performance of eligible students in reading, mathematics, history, etc. The Ed Flex provisions associated with federal funding provide ODE ample opportunity to use federal money to support the these functions.

Child Development/Child Nutrition – The functions of this unit are largely conditioned by federal funding sources; however more attention than currently is given to articulation with various K-12 programs, especially special education, may be indicated.

Monitoring and Enforcement – This unit would have as its primary goal streamlining the monitoring process, including school improvement visits and other such activities, aimed at ensuring that school districts adhere to various state and federal laws and regulations. This unit should be very lean and directed only at those monitoring and enforcement activities that are essential to matters such as state and federal laws pertaining to health, safety, and civil rights.

Fiscal and Internal Management – This office would be responsible for an upgraded ODE capacity for research, analysis and advocacy in school finance. It would also house internal management functions such as personnel and accounting.

State Board Liaison – As is currently the case, this office would continue staffing and supporting the activities of the State Board of Education.

The organizational structure suggested above should be viewed as merely illustrative of one that communicates to employees, clients, and constituents that it places high value on teaching and learning. It is not offered as a specific proposal for the way in which ODE should be organized. Reorganization should grow after refinement and clarification of the agency's mission and careful consideration of alternatives.

A final paragraph about reorganization. It is not unusual for agencies to reorganize simply to convey the impression of progress or

provide the imprimatur of a new leader. Such changes are often no more than cosmetic and give rise to the old saw about rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Reorganization is costly in time and emotional energy and should be attempted only when there is potential for enhanced effectiveness. MAP believes that for ODE, the potential benefits of structural reorganization far outweigh the costs. Even so, reorganization by itself will have little effect without attention to alignment of mission, employee training, qualifications, compensation, and recommendations offered elsewhere in this report.

Cost Implications: The principal immediate new allocation required to implement this recommendation is for the salary of the Chief Deputy. These positions typically command $100,000 to $120,000 per year in state departments of education. Beyond this new allocation, every effort should first be made to find resources within the existing organization to cover the costs of new or added positions. Once this effort has been made, ODE will be in a better position to make the case for the "real" number of dollars necessary for an appropriately staffed new structure. (It should be noted that the structure suggested here by MAP is simply illustrative; it may not be the final organizational arrangement on which ODE settles.) Additionally, consideration should be given to filling new positions over time so that any added costs can be incorporated and absorbed in a gradual fashion.

RECOMMENDATION #3:

ODE should develop for every organizational unit annual workplans with measurable outcomes and budgets specified. Changes to these plans should be negotiated when indicated by changing priorities. Managers should be evaluated, at least in part, on the basis of how well their performance measures up against approved plans and budgets.

Often the process of planning is at least as valuable as the product. It is in the give-and-take of planning that the leadership communicates priorities and expectations and that managers find opportunities and make commitments to collaborate. It is also during this process that redundant or lower priority activities can be discovered and placed in their proper perspective.

This planning process must be comprehensive and systematic to ensure that it accurately reflects a coherent vision for the entire agency. Individual unit plans, in other words, must combine to form a coherent whole.

If this process is to succeed, the Superintendent and ODE managers at every level must be fully engaged. Without their participation, the planning process quickly will come to be viewed as a "make work" exercise, and those charged with its completion will not pay sufficient attention to it. Genuine engagement of the leadership in a systematic process of planning can do much to remediate the fragmentation and loose coupling evident currently in ODE.

Managers cannot reasonably be held accountable for that over which they have little control. This is particularly true in the area of resources managers are expected to manage. Managers and other staff members who know clearly what is expected of them are likely to be most effective when they are given the resources necessary to accomplish those expectations and are held accountable for results.

MAP thus recommends additionally that each ODE unit's workplan be tied to a budget and that each manager be held accountable for accomplishing the agreed upon scope of work within the bounds of that approved budget. Changes to a budget or a workplan should be negotiated with the manager with sufficient perspective to ensure that such changes are consistent with overall ODE priorities.

Cost implications: This recommendation is cost neutral.

RECOMMENDATION #4:

The Oregon Department of Education, in cooperation with the legislature and appropriate state agencies, should take the steps necessary to attract and retain education professionals with sufficient expertise, experience, credibility and stature to provide the leadership necessary to implement the Educational Act for the 21st Century.

Lagging salary levels and civil service regulations make it difficult for ODE to attract and retain education professionals who command respect among their peers. If ODE is to influence and gain the respect and cooperation of local educators, its representatives must be seen as superbly qualified in their own right. As we have stated previously, ODE needs a cadre of specialists who have experience at least equivalent to a school principal or district curriculum administrator in a medium to large district. And ODE needs as part of its own staff individuals who are recognized experts in their subject matter disciplines. To attract and retain such persons will necessitate that they be paid a salary comparable at least to their district peers.

On the other hand, many of the administrative and enforcement functions that ODE performs can be discharged by persons without a high level of expertise in education. This suggests the need for dividing the specialist class into two levels, the higher paid of which would be for the professionals described above. It also introduces the possibility of pursuing a "cost neutral" transitional strategy of creating and filling the higher level positions only as current positions become vacant. This would make possible systematic enhancement of the skill level of ODE's workforce without a significant increase in salary expenditures.

Cost implications: As indicated above, implementing this recommendation is potentially cost neutral, depending on what resources, if any, can be "captured" from ODE's current budget. However, over time, added ODE appropriations are likely to be necessary, depending on the final organizational alignment on which ODE settles. In general, based on the current market, a new salary schedule for top level ODE employees should be constructed as follows: deputy superintendent salary should be pegged at $90,000 to $95,000 per year; assistant and associate superintendents should earn in the range of $75,000 to $80,000; specialists should be paid $60,000 to $75,000.

RECOMMENDATION # 5:

Oregon's elected position of Superintendent of Public Instruction should be replaced with an appointed position.

The trend in states in this nation has been away from elected and toward appointed education chief executive officers. At the beginning of this century, more than 70 percent of state superintendents were elected. By 1996 just 15 states maintained elected chief state school officers.

A primary reason for the move from elected to appointed state superintendents is to ensure that accountability for performance of the education system rests with the executive who controls the budget. As states have assumed ever greater responsibility for education dollars, they need likewise to assume greater accountability for how those dollars are spent.

In Oregon, ODE, and thus its chief executive officer, is responsible for education performance. Yet ODE has virtually no authority over the dollars that are allocated to or disbursed for education purposes. Thus, a superintendent who is actually part of the executive branch which generates the budget makes considerable sense.

MAP is aware that the issue of changing to an elected superintendent has been raised before in Oregon and each time the idea has died. While we are not in a position to comment on the disposition of the Oregon electorate's views on this matter, we can provide some insight into the thinking by ESD, district and school administrators.

When asked, on the survey prepared for this study, "Do you think it would be better if the state superintendent of schools were appointed by the governor or elected to office?," 57 percent of ESD administrators, 72 percent of administrators in large districts, 64 percent of administrators in small districts, and 54 percent of principals replied, "appointed by the governor."

States have accomplished the changes described above in a variety of ways. Some have implemented constitutional or legislative changes that eliminated the elected office and created an appointed one. Others (e.g., Kentucky) have accomplished the same purpose de facto by simply establishing an appointive office and shifting the resources to do it. Oregon, thus, has options available to it should it choose to make this change.

Cost implications: The principal cost to be incurred here is in the salary of an appointed Superintendent. The annual compensation range should be $125,000 to $150,000, less the salary currently paid. (As a point of comparison, the Superintendent in Portland earns $150,000 per year.) As an offset, if there are particular perquisites that attach to constitutional officers, these should be considered as potential dollars to be saved.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

The Oregon Department of Education is making efforts to transform itself from an organization whose main function was ensuring that applicable program requirements were being observed to an organization dedicated to building local capacity to meet mutually agreed-on education goals. These recommendations are designed to encourage and promote that course of action.

RECOMMENDATION #6:

Conventional kinds of monitoring and enforcement activities should be streamlined and reduced.

There are some federal and state requirements that ODE must monitor. Rules to protect the health, safety and civil rights of children come quickly to mind. Monitoring for compliance should be kept to a minimum, however, not because it is inherently bad, but because ODE's limited resources are urgently needed to provide leadership for higher academic performance. Monitoring inputs rarely influences children's academic achievement. Wherever possible, responsibility for monitoring should be delegated to local administrators or contracted out to Education Service Districts or other responsible parties.

In recent years, ODE has put much more emphasis on providing technical assistance at the local level even while enforcing compliance. Evidence of this evolving change (as reported by ODE's clients) is seen in the slowly shifting emphasis in the school improvement visits. However, more is required.

MAP recommends that activities that detract from ODE's central mission of improving teaching and learning no longer be statutorily mandated obligations of ODE. In particular, we refer here to criminal

background checks and the three-year required cycle of school improvement visits.

The law requiring that ODE be responsible for the paperwork connected to criminal background checks of non-certified employees should be changed. ODE should not be burdened with this responsibility.

MAP also recommends that the statute which mandates school improvement visits to every district every three years be amended. There are a number of problems with the current law. First, the premise that enforcement of various laws will bring about substantial improvements in student performance in not supportable. After extensive research on educational change in the United States and Canada, Fullan concludes:

> High regulation and monitoring can achieve minimal compliance at best. This may be necessary in situations that are so bad that the most basic conditions do not exist, but regulatory approaches cannot accomplish basic reform. Laissez faire, leave-it-to-the-districts orientations are also not the answer. The research we have reviewed...strongly suggests that low to medium regulation (guidelines more than prescriptions), combined with high engagement (negotiation, technical assistance, monitoring, feedback, problem solving) works better.[6]

Second, the sheer volume of these visits swamps ODE's resources and diverts too many people from other activities with substantially higher potential for improving teaching and learning. A third point, related to the second, is that the current law requires ODE to treat all districts the same, without regard to their performance. As a consequence, a district with serious problems is no more likely to be visited than one that is excelling. Finally, the teams conducting the visits are composed predominately of

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[6] Fullan, Michael G. with Suzanne Stiegbauer. The New Meaning of Educational Change. NewYork: Teachers College Press, 1991.

ODE employees who are unlikely to have recent experience in a K-12 educational setting.

MAP recommends that the law be changed to address all four of these concerns. The first step would be a careful review of the laws regulating schools and elimination of those provisions that are inconsistent with Oregon's avowed philosophy of local control. Only those statutes that relate to health and safety, stewardship of public moneys and those that have a demonstrable relationship to facilitating a high quality instructional program should be retained.

A more cost effective law would be one that assumes that school districts are in compliance unless there is some indication otherwise. Rather than sending a team of ODE employees every three years to check if a district has adopted goals, has adopted a plan to teach about infectious diseases or has a coordinated guidance program or goals for media instruction, the state could require districts to certify that they are in compliance with applicable laws. The need for site visits could be largely replaced by instituting a time-bound, systematic complaint procedure, in which ODE would investigate and resolve complaints brought by parents, students, school district employees and other citizens.

Based on the premise that districts are in compliance unless there is evidence to the contrary, the law should establish criteria to identify which districts should be visited. The two most important criteria, and perhaps the only two, are student academic performance and financial management. If a school district's students demonstrate high achievement and annual audits indicate that the district is solvent, there does not seem to be any compelling justification either for expending ODE resources to send a visiting team or spending the district's resources to prepare for the visit.

When test scores and perhaps other measures indicate that student achievement is unacceptably low, or an audit reveals serious financial

concerns, ODE should organize a team of experts who can provide valuable assistance related specifically to the identified problems. With few exceptions, ODE employees will not possess the necessary specialized and technical expertise. For this reason, MAP recommends that the law make provisions to allow ODE to call on educators in local districts and ESDs as necessary.

MAP is aware that the laws governing various federal programs require some level of monitoring. Even these rules are in a state of flux as the federal government moves toward more state and local flexibility. MAP recommends that ODE negotiate with the U.S. Department of Education monitoring procedures that are as consistent with the law as possible, while maintaining for ODE the necessary level of flexibility.

ODE should also undertake a review of its own internal procedures and regulations. The goal of this effort would be to eliminate or simplify those activities that divert resources from ODE's primary mission.

Oregon is well positioned to make other changes as well. The opportunity to reduce federal regulation already exists because Oregon has been designated an EdFlex state. The State Board of Education has the authority to waive federal regulations in many areas and should do so liberally. More critically, though, the mindset of ODE's main job as helping local districts and schools develop the capacity to educate students well, as opposed to regulating local behavior, needs further to permeate the organizational culture.

Cost implications: This recommendation may well represent a cost savings. Any resources saved should be redeployed to other ODE activities and functions.

RECOMMENDATION # 7:

Essential monitoring and enforcement activities should be consolidated into a single, relatively small unit of ODE.

Monitoring and compliance activities required by federal programs and for compliance with federal and state health, safety, and civil rights requirements should be consolidated into a single ODE unit. This unit should devise a simplified reporting system that minimizes the time and resources required of local district and school personnel.

By organizing essential monitoring activities into a single unit[7], the data collected from schools and districts can be centrally aggregated and rendered optimally useful. Consolidation of regulatory activities will also assist ODE to develop an integrated management information system and assure increased sharing of information among program managers and staff.

Cost implications: Implementing this recommendation will not cost money and, in fact, may result in a savings. Any dollars that are saved should be redeployed within ODE for other functions.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Building the capacity of districts and schools to assist students to achieve at the new, higher state-established standards is one of the most critical functions for ODE. It is all the more critical given that a recent study reported that 59 percent of Oregon's teachers have out-of-field teaching assignments (See special issue of

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[7] The exception here would be financial monitoring which will need to be housed in the finance section of ODE.

Education Week) and large school districts, such as Portland, have eliminated their curriculum departments entirely in the wake of budget cuts.

RECOMMENDATION #8:

The Oregon Department of Education should strategically redeploy the resources currently being used for "technical assistance" in Oregon to create multiple networks of service providers across the state. The role of ODE should be to serve as a catalyst and clearinghouse for new, strategic service provision efforts.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Oregon Department of Education is ensuring that educators in Oregon have the knowledge and skills to accomplish the kind of challenging program called for by the Educational Act for the 21st Century. In order to make standards-based education reform a reality, teachers and other educators will need to know how to conduct performance-based student assessments, implement innovative curricula, and develop a suite of new professional skills and instructional strategies.

Acquiring new knowledge and skill is not a one-time proposition. Districts and schools need to develop the capacity for continuous improvement. They must be able to evaluate the extent to which they are carrying out the State's mandate to educate all students to high standards and to make mid-course corrections in areas in which they find their efforts are falling short.

The most efficient and likely most effective means by which ODE can assist schools and districts on this dimension is not by acting itself as a direct provider—its own human and fiscal resources are too few—but rather by: 1) serving as the catalyst, convener and organizer of the wealth of professional development talent available in the state and, 2) connecting educators with available services. Education service districts, curriculum

and other professional associations, within-school-district experts and the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory are examples of providers who can offer the kinds of professional development opportunities schools and districts require. ODE should take responsibility for developing networks of these service providers, helping to coordinate their activities, extend their geographic reach, and control costs.

Perhaps the reason that professional development is so routinely overlooked in education is that it is not cheap. Effective professional development has to be specific to the participants' jobs; it has to have sufficient duration for participants actually to develop new skills, and it has to be reinforced over time. For teachers, experience suggests that at least three to six weeks in a full-time learning environment followed by at least two years of follow-up activity is required to make a lasting change. Similar experiences are necessary for administrators.

Few states are able or willing to add the amount of resources such massive training would cost, nor is it entirely necessary. Thus, before adding resources, ODE should look for existing resources to redirect. The first candidates for such redirection would be any money being spent (by ODE or by districts) on short-term, "parachute-drop" workshops which offer a negligible payoff in changed instruction. Second, funds expended for activities that benefit one or just a few individuals should be considered for redirection to activities with a greater system-wide payoff. Categorical program budgets are often good sources for redirecting funding to high pay-off activities for teachers of eligible students.

The greatest payoff is likely to come when Oregon educators, working collaboratively, develop system-wide strategies for improving curriculum and instruction. Such subject-specific strategies would call on all the

resources in the system and target them in a manner calculated to create a critical mass of improved instruction.

Cost implications: The first priority should be for ODE to leverage existing resources in ODE budgets (e.g., federal dollars targeted for professional development) and in local district budgets. A promising model of staff development is the California Subject Matter Projects (see Chapter 6 for more detail on this effort.) Using the California Subject Matter Projects as a rubric, and assuming that 5,000 Oregon teachers participate each year in an intensive 3- to 5-week institute, with follow-up, Oregon can anticipate annual costs of $2 million to $3 million. Statutory authority, and dollars, for an Oregon version of an effort such as the California Subject Matter Projects appears to exist in ORS 329.745 which sets aside funds for professional development centers.

RECOMMENDATION #9:

The Oregon Department of Education should assign a much higher priority to the professional development of its own staff.

As matters stand, there is no discernible provision for professional development built into the day-to-day operations of ODE. Although the agency is not so large that a good deal of information cannot be exchanged "in the corridor" on an informal basis, the lack of a structured vehicle for promoting interdepartmental communication takes its toll. Sometimes it means that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. Sometimes it means that specialists go through the motions of executing a task without really understanding how it fits into the big picture. If ODE is to lead the state education community, it needs to have its own house in

order in terms of fostering the understanding and commitment of its employees to a shared vision of education excellence. Such a commitment does not just happen; it must be cultivated.

The first priority of any organization should be to ensure that every employee understands the organization's mission and how that employee's job fits into that mission. Employees charged with implementing complex programs such as the Educational Act for the 21st Century should understand at least as well as those they are trying to help what is necessary to implement the program. This implies a knowledge far deeper and more detailed than the mere provisions of the law. It requires an understanding of the dynamics of organizational change and concrete ideas of what kinds of curricular and instructional changes will be necessary. ODE staff must have the time and opportunity to develop the requisite skills to enable them more effectively to do their jobs.

Cost implications: It is difficult to estimate the actual cost of implementing this recommendation. As we indicated in the Findings chapter of this report, private employers in Oregon reported in 1994 that 5 percent of their employees' time is devoted to on-the-job training. Thus, the real issue here is making time for staff development a part of the job of ODE employees.

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

MAP has referred frequently in the Findings chapter of this report, as well as in previous recommendations, about the need for ODE to have the capacity for research and analysis. The next set of recommendations speak specifically to the kinds of research and analytic skills ODE would find the most useful.

RECOMMENDATION #10:

The Oregon Department of Education needs greatly to increase its research and analytic capability.

Citizens and policy makers in Oregon, not to mention managers of ODE itself, need timely, accurate, relevant information bearing on policy options impacting education in the state. Implementation of a new ODE database, a recommendation detailed later in this report, will provide the basic data structure necessary to improve reporting, but will not satisfactorily resolve a troubling information gap by itself. The data collected also must be organized, analyzed and reported in a way that is useful to potential decision-makers.

The cornerstone of standards-based reform is the statewide assessment system. Properly analyzed, student assessments provide valuable clues for determining what interventions may be necessary at what grade levels and in subject areas in specific districts, schools, or sub-populations of students. Research and analysis can assist ODE to identify needs, allocate resources appropriately and, ultimately, make choices that improve student learning.

Increasing ODE's level of effort in the area of research and analysis will likely require some other activities to be curtailed. The great benefit of an enhanced research and analysis capability is that it will allow ODE managers to make such choices from a position of well-informed strength.

Cost implications: ODE's recently assigned school finance expert has just left the agency so there is currently an opportunity for a new hire at no additional cost. In general, implementing this recommendation will require 2 to 3 full-time employees with specific expertise in areas such as finance, assessment, and data management. Assuming an annual salary of

approximately $60,000 plus benefits, the annual cost is estimated at between $150,000 and $225,000.

RECOMMENDATION #11

The Oregon Department of Education needs to play a more active role in developing, collecting, and reporting financial information.

When most funds for education were raised and spent locally, there was little demand for reliable and timely budgeting and expenditure reporting at the state level. Now that the State provides most of the revenue to local districts and constrains local spending levels, it acquires a far greater burden to account to Oregon taxpayers regarding how the dollars are spent.

First and foremost, the State must ensure that local school districts employ adequate financial management procedures to guarantee that funds are appropriately accounted for and that district expenditures do not exceed revenues. Second, the State should have sufficient data and analytical capability to predict with reasonable accuracy the cost of proposed education system changes (e.g., changing class size, altering graduation requirements, requiring a minimum level of building maintenance). Finally, the State should be able to analyze expenditure patterns associated with identifiable programmatic practices in order to make judgments about the relative cost effectiveness of various educational interventions.

ODE is not currently well positioned to perform any of these functions. MAP was repeatedly informed that accounting data are not standardized across districts. While all districts follow the state-prescribed accounting manual, there remains sufficient ambiguity and room for local interpretation so as to render inter-district fiscal comparisons nearly

meaningless. Thus, MAP recommends that ODE assign high priority to standardizing accounting procedures.

Undertaking this task is laborious and time-consuming. It cannot be done by legislative fiat, nor unilaterally by ODE. Standardizing accounting procedures requires buy in from and understanding on the part of local administrators, business managers, and ultimately, the account clerks who enter the data. As described elsewhere in this report, the appropriate role for ODE would be to convene, motivate, facilitate, and assist, but otherwise to participate as only one of several users of these data. The legislature should provide appropriate funding to underwrite this process.

MAP also recommends that simultaneous with standardizing accounting procedures, ODE, along with other relevant state agencies, revise the financial reporting procedures so that district budgets are received and analyzed before the beginning of each school year and that at least one mid-year expenditure report is submitted to and analyzed by the State. ODE will need to enhance its capacity to analyze the reports as they are submitted. There are presently too few ODE employees with the expertise adequately to meet the relatively modest current demands in this area. Thus, it would be necessary for ODE to hire additional employees with the requisite experience and skills. Enabling legislation may be required as well.

In addition to the capacity to detect school districts with potential financial problems, ODE should take anticipatory action calculated to prevent such problems and develop contingency plans for dealing with districts which find themselves nearing bankruptcy. MAP recommends that ODE review the comprehensive system established by California. Chapter 1213 (AB 1200) of the California Education Code was revised to codify procedures in order to address reporting, prevention, and consequences. One of the more innovative features of this law was the

establishment of the Financial Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). FCMAT conducts ongoing training of school business officials to upgrade their skills and minimize the potential of a financial crisis. It provides assistance on request, and intervenes in the event of a financial crisis. FCMAT is a creature of the state; however, it is managed and staffed by county office of education employees (analogous to ESDs).

Standardized accounting data and enhanced analytical capacity should be sufficient to allow ODE to make reliable projections of various macro-system changes. These improvements alone will not be adequate, however, to make judgments about cost effectiveness of school and classroom level interventions and educational practices. Without reliable school level expenditure data, it is not possible to make such judgments.

Most school districts do not presently collect school level expenditure data, and considerable effort, time, money, and training of district personnel will be required before these data are reliably reported. Moreover, it will require the combined efforts of ODE, the State Auditor, other state agencies, local school districts, and others to accomplish this task. However, without detailed information regarding how money is spent at each school, it is not possible to make reasoned comparisons about the relative worth of current or proposed expenditures. Nothing less than valid, reliable, detailed information about school level expenditures will allow Oregon policy makers to address public education expenditures with the creativity and innovation they have brought to health care costs and other areas of public service.

Cost implications: We would estimate that developing the kind of standardized data system described above would cost in the $2 million to $3 million range. California is in the process of implementing just such a system. In addition to developmental costs, that state has allocated a small

sum of money ($5 per ADA) to districts to defray implementation costs. It should be noted that this sum does not reimburse districts their costs; however, districts regularly update their data collection systems anyway so, in this instance, as an encouragement to districts, the state is just offsetting this cost. Costs of additional ODE employees required to provide appropriate data analysis will be approximately $120,000 to $180,000, depending on the final ODE organizational structure.

RECOMMENDATION #12:

To enhance its Management Information System, the Oregon Department of Education should establish a single database of information that is accessible to anyone within ODE and that provides a basis for responsive answers to requests for information from outside ODE.

Development of an ODE database is not demanding from a technical viewpoint and costs should be recovered by increases in productivity. ODE is aware of the need for information that accurately represents student outcomes and that makes the linkage to funding and other governmental policy decisions in the post-Ballot Measure 5, standards-based education environment. It has been studying satisfactory alternatives. One of the proposed solutions is installation of a UNIX-based central file server which would host ORACLE database software. This approach would provide a satisfactory technical solution and would facilitate easy access to ODE information.

Prior to defining its information needs in detail, however, ODE must undertake a major philosophical shift in how it gathers and uses information. Current systems are structured so that data are proprietary, the property, in effect, of those who collect it. Some sharing occurs but it is limited at best. A single ODE database and a commonly used data

dictionary would greatly enhance the availability, and the utility, of collected data.

What are the steps ODE should take? First, ODE must determine which data, and at what level of detail, are necessary to be collected and maintained in order to address the needs of diverse users within and outside of ODE. Among these groups would be ODE managers and employees, the Oregon legislature and governor, local school district administrators, auditors, parents, and citizen groups. These and others should have a reasonable expectation that ODE can provide reliable information regarding a broad range of topics without incurring undue delay or additional costs. The determination regarding the nature of the data collection should not be undertaken unilaterally by ODE. All stakeholders, both data providers and users, should participate in making this critical threshold decision.

Next, ODE must develop a data dictionary (a directory of data definitions and locations). This effort should be undertaken with the range of data providers and users in mind. Without the full cooperation of those who are being asked to provide the data, it is unlikely that the product will be sufficiently reliable or useful. Similarly, decisions about the definitions of data will affect its usefulness to ODE and to its clients. It is rarely possible to anticipate all data needs, but careful analysis and extensive involvement of stakeholders "up front" will yield substantial dividends in terms of credibility and goodwill later on.

Third, ODE will need to determine the frequency and mode of data collection. Mode implies not only the format and media, but also the electronic data interchange protocols which will be accepted by ODE. If ODE, as planned, acquires a UNIX-based central file and ORACLE database, the agency will be able to accept data in a wide variety of formats. Over time, a more efficient procedure would be to move toward a

standardized format for all data reported to ODE. This may not present a significant challenge to many school districts. For example, approximately 70 school districts currently contract with the Lane ESD for financial services and data processing, thus requiring a single set of changes for all 70 districts. Again, it is essential that the nature and timing of such an action be mutually agreed to by ODE and other data stakeholders.

ODE should move as rapidly as possible to eliminate all hard copy data submissions. The time and resources necessary to handle and translate paper reports simply are not justifiable. Ideally, data would be transmitted to ODE electronically, but mailing disks could be an acceptable substitute. The means for electronically transmitting data to and from ODE exist in every school district that has a computer modem, and access to the Internet.

Cost implications: MAP has been informed by an ODE official that ODE can use the hardware of another agency, thus eliminating this potential cost. In addition, the cost of required software is already included in ODE's budget. Training costs will be incurred but only for those select individuals who will actually need to run the new system.

RECOMMENDATION #13:

ODE and the State Auditor should expand existing local district CPA audits to provide more information for policy makers.

MAP recommends that ODE and the State Auditor examine all information currently collected, including data gathered during School Improvement Visits, for possible inclusion in the scope of annual district audits. Some programs and functions might consistently be audited annually; others might be audited on a less frequent schedule or only when a particular need arises. Other states have found this means of auditing to

be a cost effective method of ensuring adequate local district management of certain functions and programs.

Cost implications: Implementing this recommendation will increase the costs of annual local audits. The amount of the increase will depend on the degree to which the scope of audits is expanded. Moreover, the state will need to determine the extent, if any, to which it wants to offset local district audit costs.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is key to the successful implementation of complex change. ODE has made a good start with its various kinds of communications. This final recommendation is designed further to assist ODE on that path.

RECOMMENDATION #14:

In promoting a single, unifying vision of what public education is striving to become, the Oregon Department of Education should continue to adjust its communications to its various "publics" and should develop feedback loops capable of measuring the success of its multiple communication efforts.

Communication is a crucial tool for promoting the Oregon education reform agenda. ODE has many audiences with which it must communicate, including the public, state policy makers and local educators. Each of these audiences must understand and actively cooperate in the implementation of the State's school improvement efforts. While the message to each of these groups is the same, the way that message is couched will vary significantly in emphasis and detail. Communications must be tailored to various audiences. One size rarely fits all. In effect, ODE should have a strategic plan for insuring that: 1) the public has the

information it needs in order to understand and support the goals of the reform law; 2) state policy makers have the data they need to continue to make sound educational policy, and, 3) local educators have the information they need in order to successfully implement reform.

ODE receives reasonably good marks for providing clear and frequent communications. Now it must focus those communications less on process dimensions and more intensely on the substance of the reform enterprise. ODE also needs regularly to apprise itself of the extent to which its various communications are meeting the needs of the audiences for which they are intended. Toward that end, ODE should establish feedback loops that allow it to track the relative usefulness of specific communications and to fill in information gaps where such are shown to exist. Feedback should be gathered from "clients" on all ODE activities, and these data should be gathered and analyzed in a regular and systematic fashion. Moreover, data need to be put to use. If a client complains of insufficient information, or information which is not "user friendly," ODE should come to view this kind of comment as constructive criticism and take appropriate steps to address the client's concerns.

One means by which ODE can establish feedback loops is through a series of annual surveys of local educators and citizens. Survey questions would be designed to assess the relative effectiveness of ODE's various communications. Responses would provide ODE with data by which to make judgments regarding appropriate adjustments to existing documents or additional communiqués needed.

Cost implications: If ODE were to use statewide surveys to gather information about its various communications, the cost is likely to be in the $50,000 to $75,000 per year range.

Chapter 5

RESULTS OF LOCAL EDUCATION SURVEY

Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted a statewide survey of local public school district administrators, Education Service District administrators, and school principals in Oregon as one component of the program evaluation conducted by Management Analysis and Planning Associates. The purpose of this survey was to obtain a view of the Oregon Department of Education from beyond the ODE itself and beyond the confines of the capitol and those heavily involved in public education at the state level. What the survey provides is a view of the ODE and its role in public education from the local public school district perspective and from the perspective of those who are daily and directly responsible for the education of Oregon's public school students.

This chapter provides a narrative summary and description of the survey results. Throughout, "local public school officials" is used as a convenient rubric for the three populations from which samples were drawn for the survey, and the term "administrators" is reserved for the superintendents, various types of assistant superintendents, business managers, and other ESD and district-wide personnel, while principals though also holding administrative positions, are referred to directly as "principals." It should be noted that, on balance the educators surveyed give the state reasonably good marks for the education system and likewise give ODE positive ratings on a number of significant dimensions. [1]

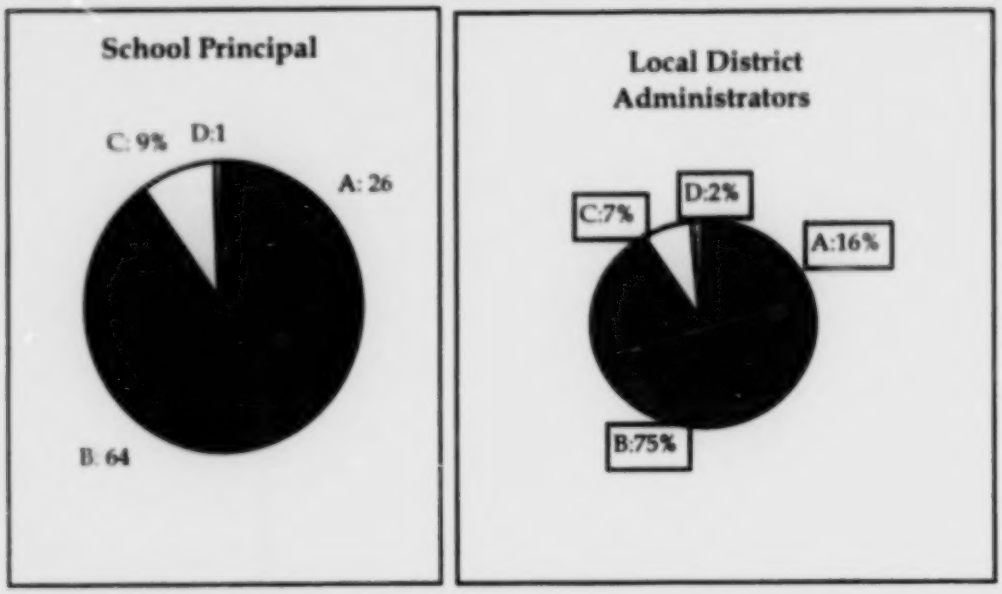
[1] A complete description of the research methodology used for this survey can be found in Appendix A Methodology.

The State of the State

To set the stage and begin to understand the local public school perspective, we note that while local district administrators' and principals' overall evaluation of the quality of public education in Oregon (kindergarten through 12th grade) shows a great many solid marks, few of those surveyed are willing to confer the highest marks. As Figure 1 shows, no more than one in ten school principals or local district administrators would rate the State's school system below a grade of "B," but just one in four school principals and one in six local district administrators are willing to assign an "A" to the quality of education provided by Oregon's K –12 system.

Figure 1

Administrators/Principals Grade the Quality of Public Education in Oregon



While local district administrators and school principals in the larger districts are a bit more upbeat, the clear consensus among these local school officials is that the state is doing a good job of educating its young people, but that room for improvement exists

nonetheless. Yet, there is nothing in these results to indicate that more than a handful of local district administrators and school principals believe that the State is somehow failing to educate its youth.

This perception of a good public school system with room to improve is shown in other results, as well. As Figure 2 shows, about two-thirds of local district administrators and school principals think that Oregon's public schools are in *pretty good* shape to provide the kind of education students will need five to 10 years from now, but that some work remains to be done.

Figure 2

OVERALL EVALUATION OF OREGON'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS' ABILITY TO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE *

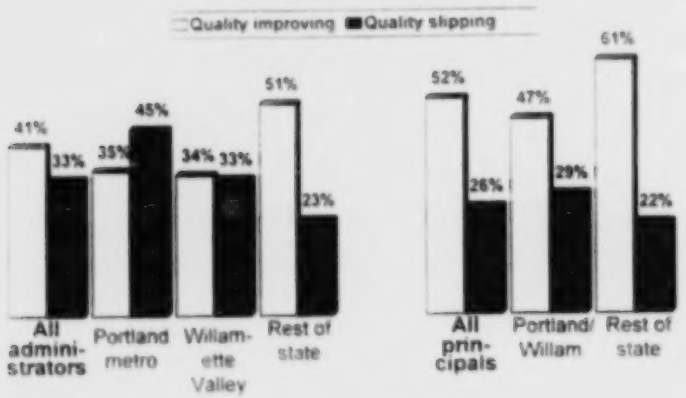
	Local District Administrators %	School Principals %	ESD Administrators %
In good shape, ready to meet challenges	6	8	3
In pretty good shape but some work needed	69	65	61
Not in very good shape, a lot of work to do	20	20	32
In trouble and need to seriously rethink	3	4	4

* *Note: Not all responses are shown*

Yet, these same local public school officials are less sanguine about the *trend* in the quality of public education in the state and the ability of the public schools to provide a 21st Century education. Although school principals are twice as likely to think that the quality of public education in the state is improving (52%) as slipping (26%), the margin is a relatively narrow 41 percent to 33 percent among local district administrators and 39 percent to 21 percent among ESD administrators. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3

Evaluation Of Oregon Public Education Over The Past Five Years



In other words, one in four school principals and one in three local district administrators express the view that public education in Oregon is not improving, and indeed, is slipping backward. This includes a 45 percent plurality of local district administrators in the Portland metropolitan area, in contrast to a 51 percent majority of local district administrators in rural Oregon, that is, outside the Portland metropolitan area and Willamette Valley, who hold the opposite view.

Not only do many of the local district administrators express some concern about the trend in public education, but as Figure 3 shows, close to one in four local district administrators and school principals feel that the state's public schools are not really in very good position to provide students with a 21st century education and that considerable work needs to be done. Some even believe that the schools are in trouble and need seriously to rethink how they are educating students. This latter view is most likely to be held by local district administrators in districts with fewer than 10,000 students and school principals in districts with fewer than 4,000 students.

What nearly all administrators and principals agree on is that there is a crisis in public education funding in Oregon. Rather than perceiving this as a problem that does not

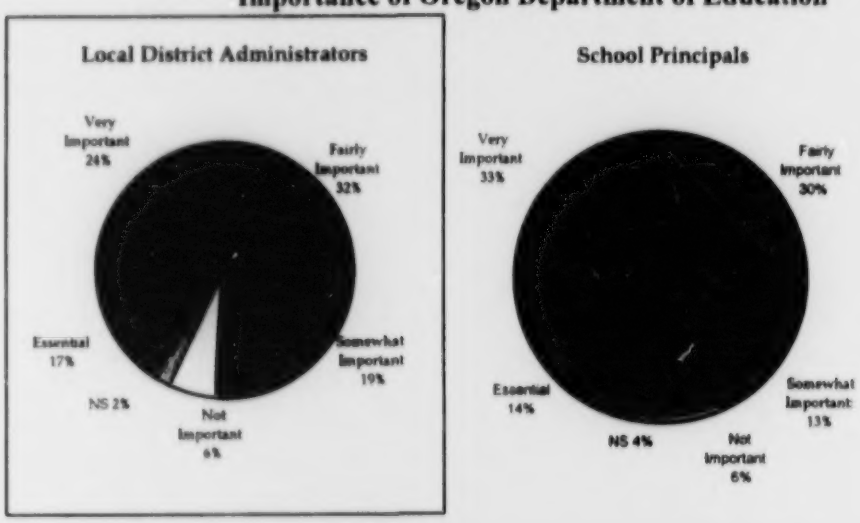
need much attention at this time, more than 90 percent of these local public school officials agree that there is a crisis in public education funding in the state that must be dealt with quickly. One could choose to discount these results as the standard view of all local school officials, but the high degree of consensus and the choice of the term "crisis" over "problem" suggests that local school officials are genuinely and seriously concerned about funding and its implications for the future. Indeed, a 56 percent majority of local district administrators and 55 percent of school principals *volunteer* funding as one of their biggest concerns about the ability of Oregon's public schools to provide a quality education for students in the 21st century.

The Oregon Department of Education

There is no consensus among local district administrators and school principals that the Oregon Department of Education plays a central role in helping them provide quality education to the students in the districts and in their local schools. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4

Importance of Oregon Department of Education



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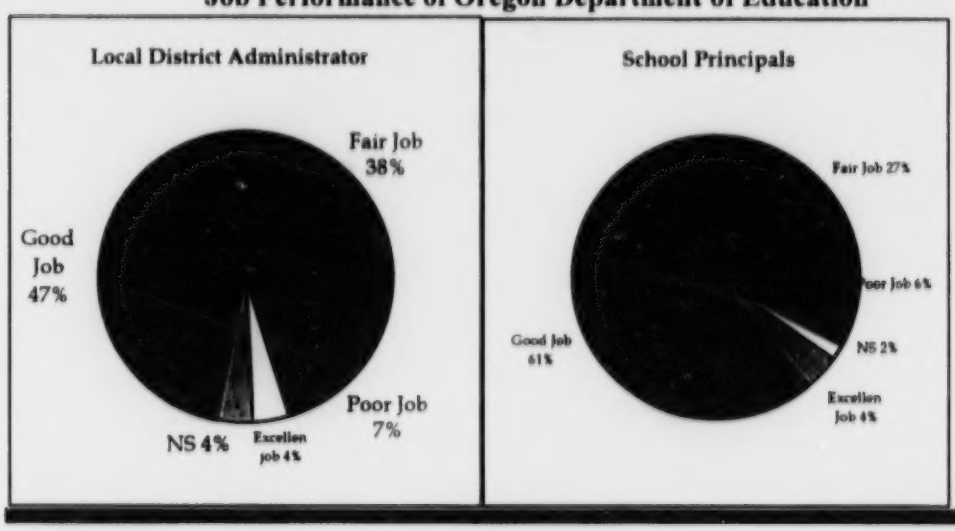
While 41 percent of local district administrators and 47 percent of school principals say that ODE does play an essential or very important role in helping provide quality education, just under one-third of each group say it is fairly important, and one in four local district administrators and one in five school principals regard its role as just somewhat or not that important. Clearly, these local public school officials are not dismissing ODE, but neither are the majority prepared to assign ODE a crucial role in providing quality education at the local level. We note, however, that nearly half the local district administrators in the Portland metropolitan area and in districts with 10,000 or more students — more than any other administrators — feel that ODE does play an essential or very important role in helping their districts provide quality education. Nearly four in five ESD administrators feel the same way, but outside the Portland metropolitan area, the figure slips to 37 percent among local district administrators.

Local public school district administrators rate the performance of the Oregon Department of Education about the same way as they rate the quality of public education in the state: good, but not top-flight. As Figure 5 shows, few local district administrators or school principals are willing to say that ODE is doing an excellent job; more than anything else, they believe that it is doing a good job.

Figure 5

Job Performance of Oregon Department of Education



Indeed, ODE's reputation among school principals is very solid, with virtually two-thirds rating its performance as excellent or good. Among local district administrators, the results are very mixed: 51 percent excellent or good, 45 percent fair or poor. There is little difference in the ratings by geography or size of district, but ODE's higher marks among school principals come almost entirely from highly favorable ratings among principals in those districts with more than 4,000 students and from principals in the Portland and Willamette Valley areas.

Local district administrators, ESD administrators, and school principals in the survey also were asked to volunteer what they believe to be the major strengths and weaknesses of the Oregon Department of Education. On the positive side of the ledger, respondents in all groups are most likely to say that ODE has good people who are personable, helpful, and dedicated. Other favorable comments most often provided by the local district administrators include: serving as a clearinghouse for information (volunteered by 13%), setting common standards and goals (12%), establishing high standards (11%), providing good educational leadership (11%), providing assistance on financial issues (11%), developing better curricula (7%), and providing guidance on rules and regulations (6%).[9]

On the other side of the ledger, the most common criticism is ODE's lack of personnel, understaffing, and inability to retain a high quality staff (volunteered by 31% of all local district administrators, though by just 10% of school principals). At the same time, one in five local district administrators and nearly as many school principals also cite a lack of adequate funding and resources for ODE. Other weaknesses perceived in ODE among local district administrators include: poor leadership (13%), a difficult political climate in which to work (9%), inexperience and lack of expertise on the part of some ODE personnel (9%), late information and slow response time (6%), and a loss of touch with reality and too much focus on the peripheral instead of the central issues (5%).

To explore further the images of ODE held by local district and ESD administrators and school principals, each respondent was read a list of 10 qualities and asked to rate the

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[9] Note that these percentages come from volunteered responses in which the respondents answered in their own words and their own way, not from their selection among a limited and specified set of choices.

Oregon Department of Education on each using a five-point scale on which a "5" means the quality describes the ODE very well and a "1" means it does not describe the ODE well at all. Figures 6 and 7 display these results. Figure 7 summarizes the results among the local district administrators by showing a simple arithmetic expression called the "differential," which is nothing more than the proportion of respondents who say each quality describes ODE (scores of "4" or "5") minus the percentage who say the quality does not describe ODE (scores of "2" or "1"). For example, the differential of +53 percent on "bureaucratic" is the proportion of "4" and "5" scores (61%) minus the proportion of "2" and "1" scores (8%), while the +51 percent differential for "competent and professional" is 62 percent (the proportion of "4" and "5" scores) minus 11 percent (the proportion of "2" and "1" scores).

Figure 6

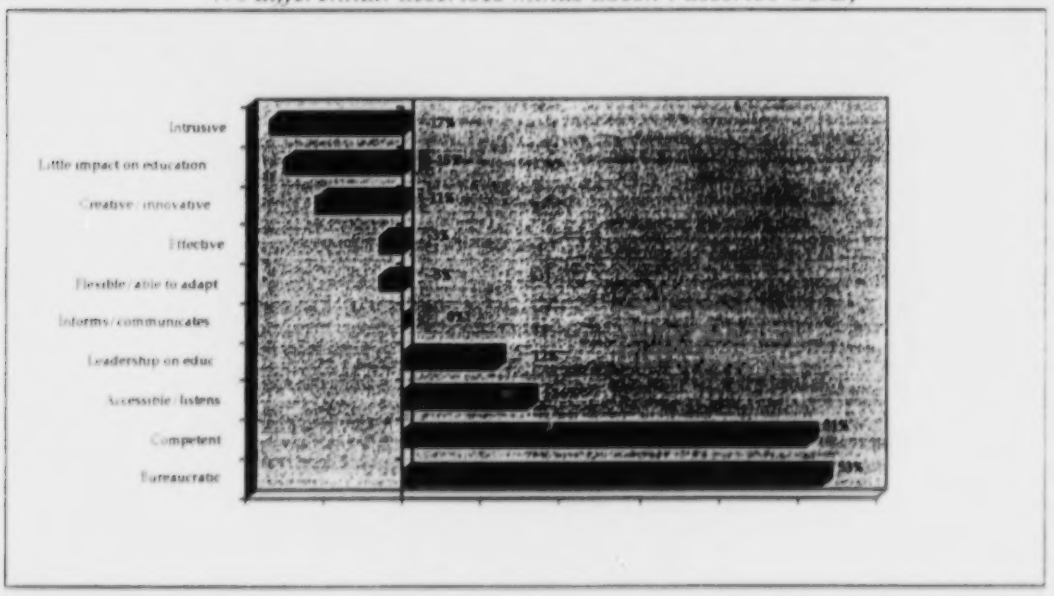
DIFFERENTIAL: QUALITIES THAT DESCRIBE THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (4+5) MINUS QUALITIES DO NOT DESCRIBE ODE (1+2)

	Local District Administrators ±%	Administrators 4,000+ ±%	Administrators Under 4,000 ±%	Portland Metro ±%	Willamette Valley ±%	Rest Of State ±%	Administrators Of ESDs ±%	Principals ±%
Bureaucratic	+53	+54	+52	+51	+54	+56	+28	+52
Competent and professional	+51	+46	+58	+44	+60	+48	+47	+71
Open and accessible, listens to people in the local districts	+16	+11	+27	+30	+13	+7	+14	+37
Leadership, promotes public education throughout the state	+12	+8	+19	+13	+7	+6	+57	+24
Informative, communicates well	-	+8	+18	+6	+1	+8	+26	+41
Flexible, able to adapt to new roles and functions	-3	-4	-	+14	-14	-7	+1	+14
Effective, gets things done	-3	-4	-3	-9	-7	-7	-6	-23
Creative, innovative	-11	-14	-5	-9	-18	-7	+7	16
Marginal, has little impact on the quality of education	-15	-18	-11	-17	-28	-6	-25	-41
Intrusive	-17	-21	-9	-19	-29	-7	-33	-16

Figure 7

ODE's Image Among Local District Administrators

(% differential: describes minus doesn't describe ODE)



In a nutshell, school principals, ESD administrators, and local district administrators from districts large and small all pretty much agree: ODE is competent and professional, but also bureaucratic.

The bureaucratic element shows up in other results as well, as the Oregon Department of Education receives mixed reviews on communication. A 43 percent plurality of local district administrators indicate ODE is "open and accessible, listens to people in the local districts," but one in five (27%) say this is not the case. ESD administrators basically agree with this assessment, while a majority of school principals (51%) give ODE favorable marks on this quality. The scores are completely mixed in terms of communication from the Oregon Department of Education to the local public school officials. As many local district administrators believe that ODE is "informative, communicates well" (35%) as believe it is not (35%). Local district administrators in the larger districts (over 4,000 students) are especially critical of ODE in this regard, as just

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33 percent rate ODE highly for being informative and communicating well, while a 41†percent plurality rate ODE in the lower portion of the scale on this quality.

The problem is neither excessive nor insufficient requests for information from the local school districts. Indeed, more than 60 percent of ESD administrators, school principals, and local district administrators in districts with more than 4,000 students feel that ODE requests about the right amount of information. Only among administrators in the smaller districts (under 4,000 students) is there a minority of significant size (31%) who find the requests for information excessive and time-consuming.

From the local perspective, the problem lies more in the Oregon Department of Education's *use* of the information it collects than in its volume. Indeed, less than half of local district administrators, ESD administrators, and school principals feel that ODE makes adequate use of what it collects. As Figure 8 shows, ODE's reports, publications, and other forms of communication receive solid marks for being "accurate and informative" and acceptable marks for being "clear and well-written."

Figure 8

PROPORTIONS WHO SAY EACH OF FOUR QUALITIES CHARACTERIZE ODE COMMUNICATIONS ALL OR MOST OF THE TIME

	Local District Administrators %	School Principals %	ESD Administrators %
Accurate and informative	64	68	82
Clear and well-written	58	65	72
Timely	47	53	61
Relevant and helpful	45	45	50

On the other hand, the scores are lower for being "timely" and "relevant and helpful." In each of these cases, less than half the local district administrators believe these qualities describe the ODE's communications at least "most of the time," and the school principals do not disagree. Note that the figure shows much higher marks on all four

qualities among ESD administrators, which indicates that ODE may be communicating better with regional than with local district administrators.

The Oregon Department of Education also receives unimpressive scores on several other qualities. Only a minority of local district administrators think of the ODE as "creative, innovative" (23%), "flexible, able to adapt to new roles and functions" (29%), or "effective, gets things done" (29%). In each case, about one in three say the quality does *not* describe ODE. ESD administrators and school principals are less critical on these qualities, but barely more than one in three in either of these latter groups is willing to say that either quality describes ODE. Either a plurality or majority takes the middle ground (a rating of "3").

The results are somewhat more favorable than unfavorable when it comes to "leadership, promotes public education throughout the state," but they hardly constitute a rousing endorsement. By 42 percent to 30 percent, local district administrators say the Oregon Department of Education provides education leadership, and school principals agree by 48 percent to 24 percent. The ESD administrators demonstrate a greater degree of consensus than do either of these two other groups, 64 percent to 7 percent, but they are the only ones among whom a majority regard the ODE as exerting educational leadership in the state.

Finally, but very important, a plurality of respondents reject the notion that the ODE is "intrusive" or "marginal, has little impact on the quality of education." Local district administrators from the smallest and the more rural areas of the state, however, are the ones most likely to regard ODE as marginal, including 38 percent from districts with fewer than 2,000 students and 31 percent outside the Portland metro and Willamette Valley regions.

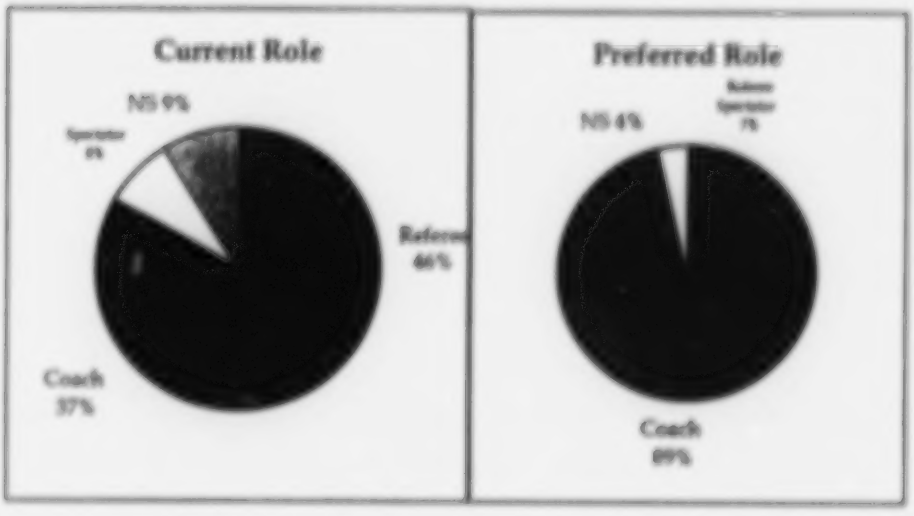
The Role of the Oregon Department of Education:
Coach, Referee, or Spectator

To capture a sense of what kind of role local public school officials want ODE to play in the educational process, respondents were asked which of the following three possibilities best describes the Oregon Department of Education: more of a referee, more of a coach, or more of a spectator. Respondents were then asked which best describes the role they think ODE *should be* performing. Figure 9 summarizes the results for local district administrators.

Figure 9

ODE's Role

As Local District Administrators Perceive It/Prefer It



The role that local public school officials overwhelming agree that ODE *should be* playing is that of a coach, "helping local school districts provide quality education," rather than performing the role of a referee, "enforcing state and federal regulations in public education," much less sitting on the sidelines and watching the game go by.

However, a 46 percent plurality of local district administrators and an equal proportion of ESD administrators think that ODE is playing the wrong role: too much of the referee, and not enough of the coach. Indeed, just 39 percent of the local district administrators who want ODE to play the role of coach believe that it is actually playing that role, while the figure increases to 52 percent among both ESD administrators and school principals.

Further analysis suggests two important points. First, as Figure 10 shows, ODE may be playing the role local district administrators want in the state's urban districts more than in its "outstate," rural districts. Local district administrators in the Portland metropolitan area are the ones most likely to think of ODE as a coach, while those outside the Portland metropolitan and Willamette Valley areas are least likely to see the Oregon Department of Education as "helping local school districts provide quality education."

Figure 10

Local District Administrators Who Perceive ODE As Coach

Indeed, a 54 percent majority of administrators in districts with fewer than 4,000 students and 52 percent in districts outside the Portland metro and Willamette Valley areas want ODE to play the role of coach, but perceive ODE as more of a referee than a coach.

Second, one of the implicit criteria local public school officials are using to judge the value of ODE is their perception of the role it plays in the educational process. Those local district administrators who feel that ODE is playing the role of coach rather than referee or spectator are much more likely to rate the performance of ODE as excellent or good (70% coach, 37% referee or spectator). The same pattern holds for school principals. Those principals who think ODE is performing a coaching role are far more likely to rate the performance of ODE as excellent or good (84%) than are those who think of ODE as more of a referee or spectator (47%). Among those who see ODE as more of a referee than a coach that helps local school districts, at least 50 percent of ESD administrators, local district administrators, and school principals rate ODE's performance as fair or poor.

What is it, then, that local public school district officials say that the Oregon Department of Education does best, and in what ways do they feel it may be falling short? Respondents were given a list of eight functions, and for each, asked whether it seems to be a major priority for ODE, a minor priority, or not something ODE does. Respondents then were asked whether the Oregon Department of Education carries out each function very well, fairly well, just okay, or not very well for each function the respondents believe to be either a major or minor ODE priority. Figure 11 summarizes the results.

Figure 11

PERCEPTIONS OF THE OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S PRIORITIES *

	Major Priority %	Minor Priority %	Does Not Do %	Very/Fairly Well %	Just Okay %	Not Very Well %
Managing and monitoring federal programs	90	9	-	79	16	4
Assessing the progress of students toward statewide goals	90	7	3	61	23	12
Representing public education interests in the state legislature	82	12	4	43	30	18
Providing leadership in curriculum and instruction	75	18	3	52	26	15
Enforcing state regulations	70	29	1	71	25	2
Helping develop local district capacity for improving public education	50	39	10	31	31	27
Organizing and providing staff development opportunities and programs	28	57	13	33	33	17
Assisting local schools and districts with financial management	27	42	23	34	19	15

**Note: Not all responses are shown*

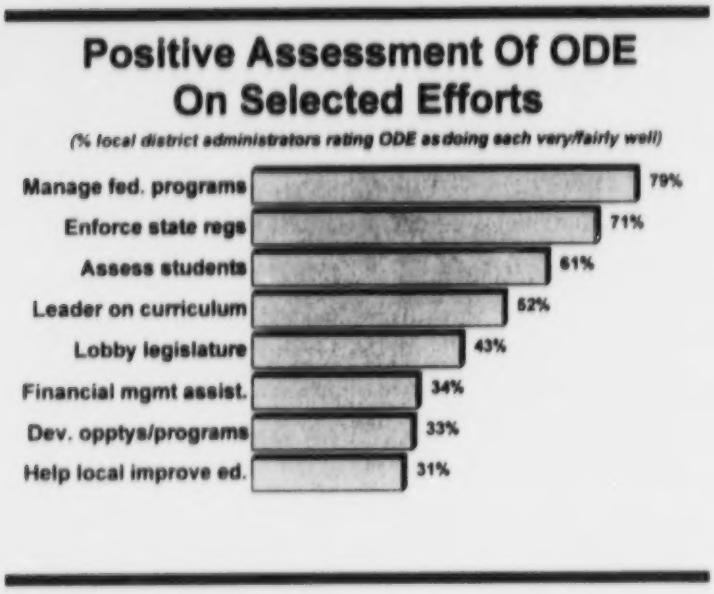
As these results amply demonstrate, at least 70 percent of local district administrators report that ODE concentrates its efforts on at least five priorities: monitoring and enforcing state and federal regulations, assessing student progress toward

statewide goals, lobbying the state legislature, and providing leadership in curriculum and instruction. The reason ODE does not get higher scores for playing the role of coach also is evident in Figure 11. Half or fewer local district administrators feel that ODE assigns high priority to those functions *most clearly and directly* related to helping local school districts provide quality education: organizing and providing staff development opportunities, helping develop local district capacity for improving education, and assisting local school districts with financial management.

Figure 11 also makes clear what local district administrators believe ODE does best: managing and monitoring federal regulations, enforcing state regulations, and assessing student progress — all of which sound more like referee than coaching activities. Note, however, that there is no function that more than 27 percent of local district administrators say ODE does not do very well.

Local district administrator ratings of the performance of ODE on each of these eight functions are presented graphically in Figure 12.

Figure 12



Further analysis reveals some important differences of opinion among local district administrators from different kinds of districts around the state:

- Administrators from districts with fewer than 2,000 students think that ODE does more in the way of organizing and providing staff development opportunities. Nearly half (47%) say this is a major priority for ODE, and 53 percent say ODE does a very or fairly good job of it.

- Administrators from these same smallest districts also rate ODE higher than do other administrators when it comes to representing public education in the state legislature. Indeed, a 56 percent majority say ODE does very or fairly well in this regard.

- Administrators from the largest districts (10,000 or more students) and smallest districts (fewer than 2,000) rate ODE higher than do other administrators when it comes to helping develop local district capacity for

improving public education. Majorities of administrators in the largest and smallest districts believe ODE makes this issue a major priority. In the smallest districts, however, 42 percent also say that ODE is doing very or fairly well in this respect; among local district administrators in districts with 10,000 or more students, this figure drops by more than half to just 20 percent.

Education Service District administrators hold many of the same views as the local district administrators, but several differences are well worth noting.

- ESD administrators are much more likely than are local district administrators to hold ODE's legislative lobbying efforts in high regard. The proportion rating ODE's efforts very or fairly good rises from 43 percent among local district administrators to 79 percent among the ESD administrators.

- ESD administrators also give ODE more very or fairly good ratings (75%, compared to 61% among local district administrators) on assessing student progress toward statewide goals.

- On the other hand, ESD administrators give ODE somewhat lower marks for leadership in curriculum and instruction. The 52 percent majority of local district administrators who say ODE is doing a very or fairly good job in this regard drops to 39 percent among ESD administrators.

School Improvement Visits

Because it is one of the Oregon Department of Education's highest priorities, a source of major expenditures, and offers the most direct contacts with local public school districts, a series of questions was included in this survey to understand the value of school improvement visits from the perspective of the local district administrators and the

principals in the schools themselves. Three in five local district administrators say they have received a school improvement visit from ODE within the past three years, including 35 percent who recall a visit in the past year alone. Another 21 percent report a visit within the past four or five years, and 14 percent more than five years ago.

As Figure 13 shows, more than 70 percent of local district administrators (and not shown in the figure, more than 80 percent of school principals) say the visits do more good than harm. A 51 percent majority of school principals and a 41 percent plurality of local district administrators, however, regard the visits as only somewhat worthwhile, rather than extremely valuable (6% of administrators, 3% of principals) or quite helpful (24% and 27%, respectively). This may not be "damning with faint praise," but neither do these results constitute a ringing endorsement.

Figure 13

Local District Administrators' View of School Improvement Visits *

** Note: Lefthand graphs are responses to Question 10B of the survey: "How useful are [School Improvement Visits] -- extremely valuable, quite helpful, somewhat worthwhile, or more harmful than helpful?" Right hand graphs display responses to Question 11A: "Compared to other things that the Oregon Department of Education could do to help, would you say that these site visits are the most helpful thing, among the most helpful, somewhat further down the list, or not that valuable?"*

When those who say they have had a visit recently enough to offer an opinion are asked to talk about the benefits and problems of school improvement visits, 70 percent of

local district administrators and more than three-fourths of school principals volunteer at least one benefit, but 62 percent of local district administrators and 56 percent of school principals also volunteer at least one problem with the visits.

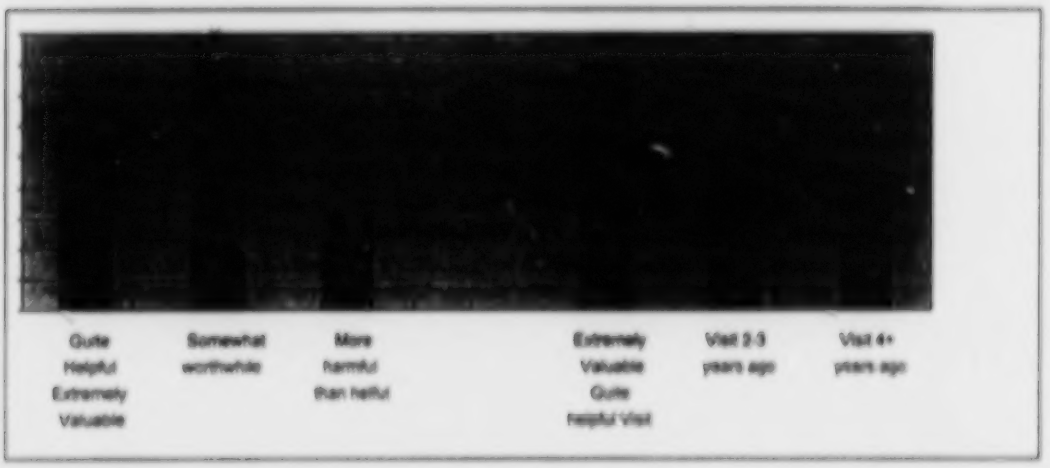
On the benefits side, local district administrators talk most about compliance — about discussing standards and the extent to which their students are meeting state standards, and about laws and regulations and making sure the local schools are meeting and complying with state and federal regulations. School principals are most likely to say the visits help them in terms of perspective —evaluating what they are and ought to be doing, helping them see things from a different point of view, and increasing their awareness of issues. The topics discussed with the second-most frequency: local district administrators talk about perspective, while principals talk about compliance.

The central question is the value of school improvement visits compared to other ODE activities, and from the local perspective, the visits just do not measure up. In fact, just 23 percent of local district administrators and 24 percent of school principals regard school improvement visits as either "the most helpful" or "among the most helpful" things ODE could do to help them in their district. A 47 percent plurality of principals and a 38 percent plurality of local district administrators rate school visits as "somewhat farther down the list." Indeed, one in four local district administrators either say these visits are "not that valuable" (10%) or actually do more harm than good (16%). The comparable figures among school principals are 9 percent and 6 percent.

Figure 14 uses the results from a somewhat different question to show this rather tepid assessment of the school improvement visits among local district administrators, especially among the larger (enrollment of 10,000 or more) and Willamette Valley districts. Local district administrators demonstrate more enthusiasm the more recent the visit, but "extremely valuable " and "quite helpful" evaluations still do not top two in five even if the site visit has occurred within the past year.

Figure 14

Local District Administrators' View of School Improvement Visits Revisited *



** Note: Lefthand bar graphs refer to survey Question 10B: "How useful are [School Improvement Visits] -- extremely valuable, quite helpful, somewhat worthwhile, or more harmful than helpful?" Righthand bar graphs again refer to Question 10B, but with an indication of the recency of the visit.*

Perhaps most telling, even among those local district administrators who think there is at least some value in the school improvement visits, only 17 percent would be willing to commit more of their own resources to continue the visitation program, while three-fourths say they no longer would have site visits done. Principals are even less enthusiastic: just 8 percent would be willing to commit more of their own resources, while five in six would skip the site visits.

Finally, just 15 percent of all local district administrators believe that school improvement visits should be conducted solely by staff members from the Oregon Department of Education. More than one-third (35%) think that these site visits would be more valuable if they were conducted by educators from other districts, and nearly half (47%) would prefer a combination. Once again, the results among school principals differ little from those of local district administrators.

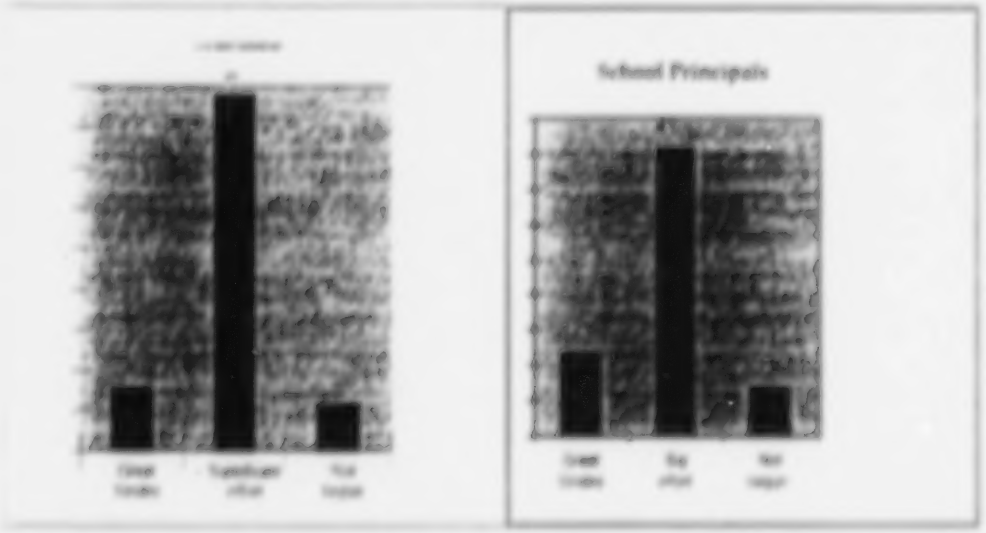
The Oregon Educational Act For the 21st Century

One of the biggest challenges for the Oregon Department of Education is to help the State's public school system prepare for and begin to implement the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. The vast majority of local school officials feel that they understand the Act, including 75 percent of ESD administrators who say they understand it very or fairly well, 82% of local district administrators in districts with fewer than 4,000 students, 89 percent of those with more than 4,000 students, and 93 percent of school principals.

From the perspective of ESD administrators, local district administrators, and school principals, ODE has not allowed this responsibility to languish but at the same time, they feel there is much yet to be done. As Figure 15 demonstrates, both local district administrators and school principals are about evenly split on whether or not ODE is making significant effort or some progress. Few either believe that great strides have been made or that ODE has not yet begun to meet the new demands.

Figure 15

ODE Progress on Oregon Educational Act for 21st Century



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It is, however, evident that local public school officials believe the pace of progress has been uneven and that ODE has accomplished much more in some areas of change than in others. Six areas were tested, with the results shown in Figure 16.

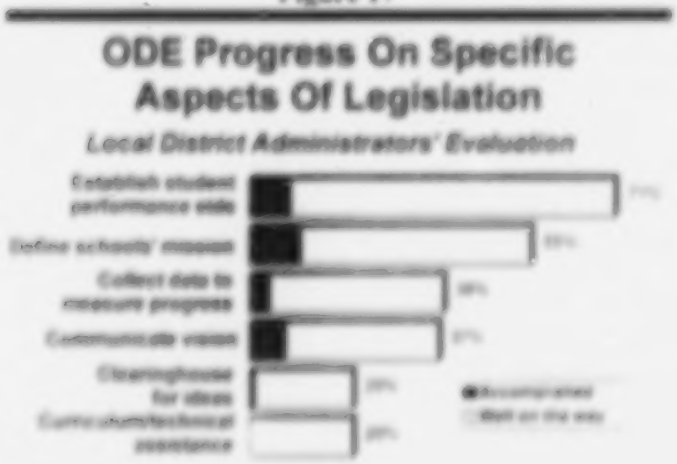
Figure 16

ODE PROGRESS TOWARD IMPLEMENTING THE OREGON EDUCATIONAL ACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
(HAS ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED OR IS WELL ON ITS WAY)

	Local District Administrators %	School Principals %	ESD Administrators %
Establishing performance standards for students	71	71	60
Defining and clearly articulating the educational mission of the state's public education system	55	70	68
Collecting the necessary data, so that local districts and the state Department of Education can measure progress in meeting student performance standards	38	44	39
Communicating a clear and coherent vision for public education in Oregon	37	50	28
Serving as a clearinghouse for the exchange of successful ways to improve education and student performance	20	35	23
Providing the curriculum development, technical assistance, and professional development, so local schools can meet these standards	20	24	23

These same results are shown visually for local district administrators in Figure 17.

Figure 17



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The consensus of opinion at the local level is that ODE has done more to define and articulate the education mission of the State's public school system than to communicate the vision clearly and coherently, and that ODE has accomplished more in terms of establishing performance standards for students than in collecting the necessary data to measure students' progress toward these goals.

It is when implementation of the reform act takes the form of the most direct assistance to schools and school districts that the local public school officials see the least progress. Just one in five ESD administrators and one in five local district administrators believe that ODE is well on its way to providing curriculum development, technical assistance, and professional development to local schools so they can meet the performance standards that are being set for their students, and to serving as a clearinghouse for the exchange of successful ways to improve education and student performance. School principals are a bit more optimistic, but just one in four thinks that ODE is well on its way to providing curricular, technical, and professional development assistance, and just one in three feel this way when it comes to serving as a clearinghouse for successful educational reforms.

In other words, local public school officials see ODE as having made significant progress in defining the education mission of the public schools and what that means in terms of student performance. However, ODE has accomplished less, so far, in terms of articulating and communicating that mission and collecting the information to measure student progress toward the goals imbedded in the education mission; and it is either just beginning or has not yet begun to develop the clearinghouse and local assistance programs that would develop the local capacity to achieve the education mission of the State's public school system.

Final Advice From Public School Officials

To provide as much guidance as possible to the Oregon Department of Education, school principals, local district administrators, and ESD administrators were asked at the conclusion of each of their interviews to volunteer what advice they would give to ODE so it can better serve the needs of their own districts and schools.

Several points clearly emerge from the pattern of responses.

- The number-one desire is for ODE to secure more funds, so it can hire more people, keep its better people, and experience less turnover.
- Second is for ODE to take more time to understand the issues, problems, and needs in the local districts and schools — to listen better, be more receptive, and not treat local school officials "like the enemy."
- Third, ODE should provide more and better educational leadership, not only with the public statewide, but within the political arena of state government.
- Fourth, ODE needs to be more focused and to "stay the course," avoid inconsistencies, and to focus more clearly and sharply on the central issue of educating children.
- Finally, ODE must provide better communication, especially better, more relevant, and more easily understood information, to the local schools and districts.

This is neither a harsh list of suggestions containing implicitly severe criticisms of ODE, nor is it an impossible list to address. If anything, this agenda indicates a clear desire to support the Oregon Department of Education and to work more closely with it in the process of improving the quality of teaching and learning in Oregon's public schools.

Chapter 6

PERSPECTIVES ON IMPLEMENTATION

Creating a high performance education system is a daunting challenge, one that state legislatures are addressing with policies to significantly raise academic standards even while extending to local districts and schools unprecedented flexibility in meeting jointly agreed-on performance benchmarks. Oregon was one of the first states to adopt the standards/flexibility approach to school reform but it is certainly no longer alone in this endeavor. Forty-eight states have committed to developing state level academic standards of one kind or another; 15 of these have already promulgated standards in the core subject areas that are clear and well-grounded. A total of 46 states require schools to report data on student performance.

A major lesson from other states' experiences with standards-based reform is that change cannot be accomplished in piecemeal fashion. Higher standards and assessments will not improve student performance by themselves unless schools both are granted the flexibility to seek site-specific solutions and helped to gain the capacity to upgrade instruction. Neither reform rigidly prescribed by statewide mandate nor reform as interpreted by completely autonomous community schools has an inspiring track record in improving student performance. What seems to offer the best prospect of success is a simultaneous "top down" and "bottom up" strategy of change, where the multi-faceted leadership of the state, as exercised through its state department of education and including an implementation strategy of investment, information and assistance, complements local initiatives in fostering high academic performance.

The basic perspective to keep in mind, however, is that standards-based reform is still a work in progress, not just in Oregon but throughout the nation. It

cannot yet be said that any state has accomplished the difficult, delicate and ambitious task of reinventing its public school system so that a much higher proportion of students is being well prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Nevertheless, the experiences of other states offer valuable lessons – of both a hopeful and cautionary nature – for how the Oregon Department of Education might go about leading the State's standards-based reform initiative. Accordingly, this chapter describes significant aspects of the school reform experience of three states – Kentucky, California and Rhode Island.

KENTUCKY: THE POWER AND PERILS OF HIGH STAKES ASSESSMENT

In June 1990, the Kentucky legislature passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), a sweeping restructuring of the state's public school system. While the timing of Kentucky's law coincided with Oregon's reform legislation, the impetus for change was quite different. KERA was compelled by a decision handed down by Kentucky's Supreme Court declaring the state's "entire system of common schools" to be unconstitutional. This unprecedented sweeping out of the status quo was based not just on documented inequities in the school funding system but on palpable dysfunction in the schools themselves. Kentucky traditionally had paid little for education and – with an adult literacy rate of 50th in the nation, a high school completion rate of 50th in the nation and endemic poverty – had gotten little out of it.

KERA was the aggressive, standards-based plan to change all that. Its essential architecture – higher educational standards and new statewide assessments to be accompanied by rewards and sanctions according to school performance – was supplemented by a host of support systems intended to address a spectrum of anticipated challenges. Thus, KERA made staff development a line item in the state budget, increasing money allocated to helping

teachers improve their instruction 25-fold and creating eight regional service centers to provide training and technical assistance to school districts. The law mentioned preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds and children with disabilities (now serving 82 percent of eligible children); an after-school and summer school program for students who need more time to learn; and family resource centers to put impoverished students and families in touch with needed health and social services. To guarantee local involvement in the change process, the state also created School-Based Decision Making Councils consisting of teachers and parents. These councils were invested with real authority (for example, the SBDM Councils participate in hiring school principals).

The Kentucky Department of Education was abolished and reorganized in June 1991. The reorganization created divisions basically corresponding to the various functions outlined in the new law. Five major studies of the new, reconstituted KDE offer a mixed picture of how it has promoted change. Its clients – school and district administrators – still regard KDE as heavily bureaucratic and disposed to control the direction of reform through top-down fiat. They fault KDE for being inconsistent and confusing in the advice it gives but praise the work ethic of its personnel. The most substantive criticism of KDE's performance, however, has revolved around one key element of the reform program: the high-stakes assessments.

Of all KERA's initiatives, the area of assessment and accountability has certainly proved the most controversial. The assessment system, known as the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System, or KIRIS, consists of a variety of formats, including writing and math portfolios of student work, open-ended and multiple-choice questions, essay examinations and performance events. It is administered to all students in grades 4, 8, and 11/12 in all schools in Kentucky. KIRIS is a "high-stakes" testing system because important consequences flow from how students perform on it on a schoolwide basis. Based on comparisons between data collected at the beginning of an accountability cycle and average scores over

the next three years, individual schools are placed into one of five categories: a) eligible for monetary rewards, b) successful, c) not meeting threshold or improving, d) in decline, and e) in crisis. Educators in the first category received approximately $26 million in bonus money in 1995. Certified staff in schools in the lowest category, "in crisis," have not yet suffered the extreme sanction called for in the original law—being placed on probation. However, schools so designated must develop a school improvement plan and, in many cases, are assigned a "Kentucky distinguished educator" to advise school personnel on implementing the plan.

The problem with high stakes assessment, it turns out, is that the assessment instruments themselves are sufficiently novel that they lack a high degree of reliability, all of which makes the assignment of rewards and punishments unacceptably arbitrary. For example, the KIRIS accountability index of schools purported to show a 22 percent increase in performance at grade 4, 13 percent increase in grade 8, and 9 percent increase at grade 12, in the first four years of the reform law. But external research evaluations called into question the accuracy of these results. For one thing, KIRIS results did not correlate very closely with national standardized tests such as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills or National Assessment of Educational Progress, as would be expected. An evaluation by the Office of Education Accountability, a legislative agency charged with monitoring KERA activities, found the KIRIS scores to be "substantially inflated" and the technical test procedures used to derive them seriously flawed.

The Kentucky Department of Education has taken steps to repair the assessment problems, including (at the explicit direction of the legislature) temporarily halting the use of math portfolios as a basis for evaluating student achievement. Still, the damage lingers. A 1995 survey showed that only about one in four Kentucky teachers believes KIRIS to be a very good or moderately good measure of how effectively schools are performing.

There are important lessons for other State departments of education in Kentucky's experience. First, the evidence confirms that statewide assessment has proved to be a powerful lever in influencing what goes on in the state's classrooms. Researchers have found positive effects on instruction, especially increases in student writing. On the other hand, the assessment miscue underlines the fact that SDEs in standards-based reform states are basically in the position of a pilot learning how to fly the plane on the way to the target. State departments of education are expected to provide leadership, but the terrain itself is uncharted. In such a situation, there is a high likelihood that mistakes will be made. All the players in education reform need to recognize that. They should also realize, as one informant told us, that there may well be the greatest advantage to students and society in pressing ahead and muddling through, as Kentucky has done, correcting problems as they crop up, rather than waiting until the perfect solution has been invented (which day will never come, given the complexity of the task).

CALIFORNIA: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE SUBJECT MATTER PROJECTS

During the decade of the 1980s, California initiated an ambitious reform of K-12 education. The predominant characteristic of that effort was its systemic, well articulated nature. The key elements in the effort to improve teaching and learning were curriculum frameworks, which attempted to define a professional consensus concerning what students should learn in specific subject areas; statewide assessments based on the frameworks; and professional development opportunities and the selection of instructional materials also tied to the frameworks. The Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Department of Education played prominent leadership roles in putting all these elements in place. For the purposes of this discussion, we will focus on one aspect of the

systemic reform: SDE leadership in greatly enhancing professional development opportunities.

Virtually all educators are doing the best job they can; if they knew how to produce the desired outcomes stipulated in statewide standards, they would already be doing so and reform would be a moot topic. The difficulty is not one of motivation or willingness but rather of capacity. MAP knows of only two ways to improve instruction: either hire staff who already possess the desired ability or improve the skills and knowledge of the incumbent cohort of teachers. Assuming the latter is the only feasible short-term solution, MAP offers the California Subject Matter Projects (CSMP) as an example of one effective way California addressed professional development of teachers.

What are the CSMP? They are a permanent, state-funded, statewide network of discipline-based entities which provide professional development for K-12 teachers. There are projects in nine core subjects (Arts, Foreign Languages, History-Social Sciences, International Studies, Mathematics, Physical Education and Health, Reading and Literature, Science, and Writing) at 97 sites throughout California. Each year approximately 20 percent of California's teachers are served by the CSMP. In stark contrast to what usually passes for professional development in education, the CSMP bring about meaningful changes in teachers' classroom performance by working with teachers over an extended period. The core of the learning experience is a 3-4 week intensive summer institute augmented during the school year and in subsequent school years by a series of follow-up sessions and workshops.

Outside evaluations of the CSMP have been uniformly positive and consistently identify a lasting formative effect on instructional practice inside the classroom[10]. (To be sure, the effectiveness of individual projects has varied from time to time and discipline to discipline.) The Projects have also been models of

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[10] See, for example, Mark St. John: "The California Subject Matter Projects: A Summary of Evaluation Findings", 1993-1996, Inverness Research Associates, December 1996.

cost effectiveness derived from economies of scale only a statewide program can enjoy. CSMP's average annual cost of $305 per participating teacher compares favorably with $612 for California Eisenhower Projects, $3000 for National Science Foundation LSC Projects and $4000 for the California Mentor Teacher Program.

CSMP rely on interagency cooperation but do not require the day-to-day management of the State Department of Education. The budget and administration of CSMP reside in the Office of the President of the University of California. More than half of the sites are located on California State University campuses. Nearly half of the directors are classroom teachers and the individual projects report extensive working relationships with county offices of education, local school districts, curriculum associations and various regional consortia. Although the CSMP were conceived by the Superintendent of Public Instruction as an integral part of the reform strategy, the SDE plays only an advisory role in their operation.

There are two lessons for SDEs from the California Subject Matter Projects experience. First, the CSMP are a good example of an SDE demonstrating leadership in an arena that was not specifically authorized by law. From the mid-1970s California's SDE dedicated a portion of its discretionary federal funds to the support of the Bay Area Writing Project. In the early 1980s, responding to the need to enhance the capacity of teachers, the SDE diverted discretionary funds from lower priority activities to establish what were then called Curriculum Implementation Centers in each of the disciplines following the Writing Project model. These were housed in county offices of education. The existence of the CIC helped build a constituency for legislation in 1988 creating the CSMP and funding them in the state budget.

The second lesson is that the best expenditure of resources is the one that has a large multiplier effect in terms of influencing what happens in the classroom. The current Oregon Department of Education strategy of funding individual teachers to engage in "action research" in their individual classrooms may be a

good use of funds for the individual classroom but it fails the test of generating leverage for system-wide improvement. Sometime SDEs need to stop doing good things in order to free up resources to pursue the most powerful strategies for improving teaching and learning at the classroom level.

RHODE ISLAND: REORGANIZING TO EMPHASIZE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Peter McWalters was named Commissioner of Education for the State of Rhode Island in 1992. He assumed leadership of a very traditional SDE which saw as its mission regulating and enforcing state and federal program rules. Rhode Island's response to "A Nation at Risk" was the "Basic Education Plan" – a four-inch-thick handbook of inputs (required minutes of math instruction, bathrooms per students, etc.) that were mandated for local school districts. Not surprisingly, districts viewed the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) as the education police, helpful only in the context of interpreting and enforcing regulations.

Although initiated primarily by the Regents (equivalent to Oregon's State Board of Education), school reform in Rhode Island exhibits many characteristics similar to Oregon's strategy. Both set learning and performance goals for students, both provide for statewide assessment balanced by local autonomy for deciding how to achieve goals, both call for collaboration between schools and other social agencies, and both place the SDE in a leadership role.

Commissioner McWalters' main goal for RIDE at the outset was to transform it from being the enforcer of rules to the leader of education reform. He faced familiar obstacles in doing so: a strong tradition of local control, a history of budget reductions, half of RIDE's budget from federal sources which apparently constrained how it could be used, and employees represented by an active union.

None of these conditions has changed in the intervening years, but RIDE has -- after a struggle.

In 1993, the Commissioner reorganized RIDE with primary emphasis on reducing reporting levels and flattening the organization. He left the arrangement of units, structured by funding source, unchanged. As a result, while there was ample evidence of employee support for the reorientation, the desired change of behavior did not follow.[11] A second reorganization was initiated.

The thrust of the second reorganization was to emphasize the importance of teaching and learning in the structure. Responsibilities of a single deputy commissioner were bifurcated into administrative and education program assignments. An assistant superintendent with experience managing complex education change was hired (from a local school district) to lead the education program functions. The second significant change was to arrange all professional employees into cross-functional teams with specific responsibilities for improving local district capacity. A third change, which has proved to be somewhat controversial, was the implementation of a system of client feedback concerning RIDE interactions.

Some recommended changes have been postponed due to inadequate resources, bargaining agent resistance, political sensitivities and so on. Nevertheless, the change to a capacity building orientation seems to have firmly taken root. This change is sufficiently dramatic that a recent newspaper column (The Providence Sunday Journal, 2/8/97) took note of it, reporting commendations from district superintendents saluting the new orientation.

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[11] Guthrie, James W. et al. "Maximizing Returns on Rhode Island's Education Investments: A Management Consulting Report to the Rhode Island Board of Regents and Rhode Island Department of Education." Management Analysis and Planning Associates (April 14, 1995).

Chapter 7

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This evaluation of the Oregon Department of Education has endeavored to assess ODE within the context of that agency's new responsibilities to implement a more challenging, and more complex, system of education. MAP has reserved this final chapter of the report to underscore a few points that we believe are critical to Oregon's continued education progress.

First, policy makers must constantly keep in mind how difficult systemic change is. Education reform is a task often underestimated. But changing an institution and a social process – and education is both of these – is among the most challenging of undertakings.

The kind of wholesale education reform in which Oregon is engaged is fundamentally about *changing habits of mind*. It is about shining a light on unexamined tradition, scrutinizing habitual ways of doing things, and learning new behaviors and approaches. It takes time, training, patience, and a rather high tolerance for ambiguity along the way.

Second, education improvement is a team effort. The governor, legislature, ODE, local districts and schools, and Oregon citizens all have important roles to play in ensuring that the State's students have the opportunity to meet the academic expectations the State has laid before them.

Third, we emphasize here, as we have throughout the report, that education improvement is rarely advantaged by more laws or added regulations. As research has amply shown, "You can't mandate what matters most."[12] What matters most are capacity and will. These can neither be legislated nor ordered. They must be developed and honed over time.

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[12] Berman, Paul and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin. *Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change*, Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1975.

Finally we take up a question we know is on the minds of some Oregon policy makers. *Is there a need for a department of education?* MAP's answer is an unequivocal "yes."

Systemic reform has been described as a combination of "top down" and "bottom up." In other words, authority and responsibility for, and ideas about, education improvement move both from the statehouse to the schoolhouse and from the classroom all the way up through the policy system. The role of ODE, indeed of any state department of education, is to create and communicate a vision of educational excellence, based on the design contained in state policy, and then implement a strategic plan to operationalize this vision. ODE additionally needs to develop and put in place a system to hold people accountable for education results. And it must provide assistance (principally in the form of capacity building) to ensure that desired results can be achieved. The Oregon Department of Education often serves as the critical two-way link between state officials on the one hand and local educators on the other. It has an essential – and nontransferable – role and mission.

MAP has been pleased to have had the opportunity to conduct this appraisal of the Oregon Department of Education. We hope that the information contained in this study will prove useful to Oregon policy makers, educators and citizens.

RESPONSE TO REPORT

OREGON'S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[redacted]

April 18, 1997

Sam Cochran
Acting State Auditor
Division of Audits
Office of the Secretary of State
255 Capitol Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97310

Dear Mr. Cochran:

Enclosed is the Department of Education's response to the Management Analysis & Planning Associates' draft program evaluation dated March 24, 1997.

Sincerely,

C. Gregory McMurdo
Deputy Superintendent
of Public Instruction

Enclosure

[redacted]

Oregon Department of Education Response to Draft Audit
April 18, 1997

Following is the Oregon Department of Education's response to the report, "TO LEAD EDUCATION REFORM, An Appraisal of the Oregon Department of Education" by Management Analysis & Planning Associates, dated March 24, 1997 (MAP report).

I. Findings

Leadership

1. ODE employees, while dedicated and hardworking, do not perceive themselves as having an important role in improving teaching and learning.

The Department agrees that its employees are dedicated and hardworking. It disagrees with the statement that they "do not perceive themselves as having an important role in improving teaching and learning." The actions of Department staff make clear that they view themselves as responsible for improving student achievement. During school improvement visits, Department staff review district assessment scores and dropout rates with district staff. Department staff view the state assessment as a tool to measure student progress and improve learning. Oregon's school improvement effort is based on the premise that assessment results and student progress are tied directly to improved curriculum, instruction and student learning. Department staff have far too much experience in this diverse state to suggest there is one strategy for change that can be applied across the board to improve student achievement.

As MAP acknowledges, implementing a standards-based system is complex. It must be done sequentially. The Department began developing a criterion-referenced standards and assessment system in the 1980s. The first statewide assessment for all students occurred in 1991. Following 1995 amendments to the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, the K-12 content and performance standards were not ready for adoption by the State Board of Education until September and December 1995.

2. ODE's current organizational structure neither conveys nor facilitates an activist leadership role in improving teaching and learning.

The Department disagrees with this finding. Department positions were cut substantially due to Ballot Measure 5 in 1991. The organization was flattened to make it more responsive to the educational changes called for in the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century.

Department staff bring a depth of knowledge and experience, not to mention professional affiliations, to their areas of expertise. Though too lengthy for this

document, a few examples may illustrate the point. The Department's social sciences specialist is outgoing president of the Oregon Council for the Social Studies. The science specialist (a full-time, not part-time staff member) was president-elect of the Oregon Science Teachers Association. The Department's new mathematics specialist begins work after his teaching year ends this summer. Despite demanding jobs that limit available time, Department staff do attempt to communicate across offices. Managers from each office in the Department meet every two weeks. Assessment and professional technical education managers and staff meet frequently with curriculum staff and compensatory education.

3. *Current conditions preclude CCE from securing as employees the broad range of educational experts necessary to carry out the requirements of education reform.*

The Department agrees but questions how it can raise salaries within the state system. Statutory and other changes would be necessary and undoubtedly would be strenuously resisted by state employee union members.

4. *CCE does not systematically employ comprehensive planning and budgeting as management tools.*

The Department disagrees. Each biennium, the Department develops a comprehensive plan for implementing the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century and other state and federal laws. Staff discuss goals to improve education in the state and use the goals to draft legislation. All items with budgetary implications become part of the Department's budget submitted to the Governor and subsequently to the legislature.

5. *Few statutory changes are required to enable CCE more effectively to take a leadership role in improving teaching and learning in the state.*

The Department agrees that Oregon's one-volume education code provides a workable framework for the state's educational system unlike highly detailed, prescriptive, multi-volume codes often found in other states. The Department disagrees, however, to the extent that certain changes recommended in the SSF report require additional state funding at a time when state education dollars are limited.

6. *The elected office of superintendent of public instruction tends to fragment responsibility for education.*

The Department agrees. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Norma Paulus and Department staff have long held that the state superintendent should be appointed by the governor, not elected statewide. Change may be possible now as the governor, state superintendent and many legislative leaders support it. Several previous efforts to make the change failed as voters preferred direct election.

[redacted]

7. CDE has undertaken efforts to transform itself from a regulatory organization to a school assistance organization. However, despite its efforts to move from regulation to assistance, CDE continues to conduct most of its work as if it were primarily a regulatory and compliance organization.

The Department agrees that it is becoming a school assistance organization. It disagrees with the finding that the Department conducts most of its work as if it were a regulatory and compliance organization. Due to limited resources, the Department has focused on developing the standards and assessment system and refocusing the standardization process. In 1991 and earlier, standardization staff operated separately from school assistance staff and placed a major emphasis on compliance. When the Department reorganized in 1991, barriers separating offices were dissolved and staff began working together on school improvement. The new school improvement visits, combining monitoring with technical assistance, were one result. The governor recently signed Senate Bill 175, introduced at the request of Superintendent Fowler, to eliminate frequent on-site visits to all districts. This law will greatly reduce the amount of time consultants spend on school improvement visits, allowing them to focus on building capacity to improve teaching and learning in their regions.

8. CDE has instituted a statewide assessment program but may not be sufficiently positioned to take full advantage of its power to improve teaching and learning.

The Department disagrees with the finding that it is not positioned to take full advantage of its assessment system. SRI's conclusion is premature and demonstrates unfamiliarity with the Department's implementation plan.

The Department allocates time and funds to methodically and sequentially create the curriculum and assessment system. It is important to recognize the steady, persistent development and implementation of the system. The academic content standards have been developed but teacher resource documents are not yet complete. The state assessment system will be completed by 1998-99. English and mathematics assessments are in place. The Department is field testing science assessments and is developing assessments in the social sciences (history, civics, geography and economics). Development will take time, will involve subject matter associations and many other partners as well, and will require funding. For a more complete discussion

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

of the assessment system, see "Review of the Oregon Statewide Assessment Program: The Report of the External Review Team."

The assessment system is intended to play a key role in improving education in the state. However, it cannot be the sole indicator of a quality school system. Other indicators might include high school dropout rates, percentages of college students taking remedial courses, percentages of high school graduates attending college, percentages of high school graduates working full time and earning more than 150 percent of the poverty level, adult literacy rates, educational attainment of faculty and school climate. Some of these indicators may be difficult to measure.

Capacity Building

9. *Many key ODE staff members convey an understanding of the importance of providing ongoing assistance to districts and schools. However, ODE has no apparent comprehensive plan for building local school and district capacity through ODE-preferred technical assistance.*

The Department agrees that staff members understand the importance of ongoing technical assistance and have a progressive view of professional development. The Department disagrees with the finding that it has no plan for building local capacity.

The Department had to develop its standards and assessment system before it could begin providing technical assistance to implement those standards. Just four months ago, the State Board of Education adopted academic content standards, performance standards in English and mathematics and career-related learning standards. The Department is developing a comprehensive implementation plan. Department managers and staff meet regularly to flesh out the implementation plan and ensure that all office activities support improved teaching and learning. The Department is working with an implementation team from the governor's office, Oregon Business Council, community colleges and higher education to describe the next steps to implement school improvement goals statewide.

In June, Department staff will meet with professional organizations to draft professional development plans in each academic content area.[1] The plans will be reviewed by elementary, middle and high school level professional organizations, Oregon Association of Education Service Districts, the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and the Oregon Education Association.

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[1] Oregon school year now operates over fifteen days, University of Colorado, Joseph Ryan, University of South Carolina, Rich Hamlin, American Living Training Program, Clinical Studies, Utah, Council of Chief State School Officers. The report was published in October 1993.

[2] The Department considered but is unsure whether those classrooms during the school year or of professional development activities will occur outside the regular school day and year.

The Consolidated District Improvement Plan connects the state's vision for standards-based education with district planning requirements. Since May 1996, Department staff have conducted a series of 50 workshops attended by nearly 1,200 educators to help them build capacity for local improvement planning. The workshops focused on building capacity, not merely producing a written document. One workshop, for example, focused on state performance standards, the state assessment system and interpreting state test results to inform local goals.* Department staff help districts connect program and curriculum changes required for the Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery to district planning. The Department also works with the Confederation of School Administrators to support district decision making based on analyzing student achievement results.

The Department supports a variety of other capacity building activities. With the Confederation of School Administrators, it funded the Principal Leadership Network. Three hundred principals meet in regional study groups to develop regional professional development plans to build administrative skills. This summer, the Department will host a Superintendent Leadership Forum to help superintendents build capacity to implement standards-based education in their districts. The Department also awarded grants to all interested education service districts to work with school districts in their regions to align local curriculum with content standards, as the first step in implementing a standards-based system.

The Department agrees that school improvement visits consume a great deal of staff time but recognizes that will change soon. The governor recently signed Senate Bill 1?3, introduced earlier this session at the request of Superintendent Paulus. The bill allows annual assurance forms to certify compliance with state standards, rather than on-site visits. With the obligation of school improvement visits removed, specialists will be able to focus more on building capacity for improving teaching and learning in their regions and targeting resources to individual districts in need.

The Department is working to improve teaching and learning despite significant systemic hurdles. In a preliminary analysis conducted earlier this year, the Department estimates there are millions of dollars currently in school district budgets for professional development. As a result of collective bargaining agreements between districts and teachers, the money may be used for activities not necessarily related to Oregon's school improvement plan. The money must be redirected, possibly by statute, to activities related to Oregon's vision for improving teaching and learning.

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*MAP's statement that there is no mention of the statewide assessments in the Consolidated District Improvement Plan is inaccurate. As stated on page 1 of the Department's guidelines for Consolidated District Improvement Plans, district data analysis focuses on student performance. Student performance is measured by statewide assessments. As stated on page 8 of the guidelines, districts are encouraged to develop goals based on improving student achievement and performance in content standard areas. Statewide assessments measure student achievement and performance in content standard areas. As stated on page 11 of the guidelines, districts must certify that they are providing programs for students to meet the Certificate of Initial Mastery standards. The Certificate of Initial Mastery standards include performance standards on the statewide assessments.

Requirements for teacher licensing, certification and continuing education are controlled by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. Currently, Oregon educators need not pursue continuing education after their initial five-year renewal. At the request of Superintendent Paulus, Senate Bill 181 was introduced earlier this year. Both it and Senate Bill 650—introduced with Superintendent Paulus' support—would place the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission under the State Board of Education and require continuing professional development for license renewal.

10. *ODE generally is not viewed as a resource by districts and schools.*

The Department disagrees with this finding. If it is not viewed as a resource by districts and schools, it is difficult to understand the average of 250 calls per week received by curriculum specialists alone requesting assistance in implementing Oregon's school improvement plan.[1]

The Department recognizes that districts feel pressure when state test results are released. The Department is striving to help parents and the general public understand that the new standards are quite high and many students will not achieve them immediately. It is working with the governor's office, Oregon Business Council and other partners to communicate that information. In releasing the 1996 state test results,[2] the Department noted that only 31 percent of tenth graders met the new performance standards in mathematics. The public needs to be shown the magnitude of the change expected of students. Far from reporting the bad news and washing its hands of the matter, the Department developed a multi-pronged strategy to help schools improve mathematics teaching and learning. It met with mathematics teachers from around the state to gather suggestions for a professional development plan. Superintendent Paulus wrote all school boards in the state, describing five actions they could take to improve mathematics teaching and learning in their districts. The Department organized two mathematics summits for 800 teachers and administrators and a mathematics leaders conference for 180 teachers. It located $300,000 in private grants for districts to implement the mathematics standards. It focused its Goals 2000 grants on mathematics and works with higher education to coordinate use of K-16 Eisenhower professional development money.

11. *Oregon's ESDs, subject matter associations, universities, and other institutions represent vastly underutilized resources available to ODE.*

The Department disagrees with this finding. It regularly collaborates with education service districts, subject matter associations, universities, the Northwest Regional

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[1] The Department regrets the difficulty MAP experienced reaching two curriculum specialists. The specialists MAP tracked phone calls with were working in districts that week.

[2] The Oregon Statewide Assessment is not new. Sample assessments of some students began in 1991. Annual statewide assessments of all students at the benchmark years began in 1991.

Educational Laboratory and other institutions and professional organizations to provide technical assistance and professional development. Education service districts have worked with the Department on writing assessments since 1991 and mathematics problem-solving assessments since 1994. In 1997, more than 120,000 student writing samples and more than 120,000 student mathematics problem-solving assessments were scored at 17 education service district scoring sites. Education service district regional coordinators work closely with schools and districts, acting as Department field staff in many ways. Education service districts also sponsor hundreds of staff development programs in schools across the state. Two years ago, the Department created the Oregon Public Education Network with education service districts. Among other things, this network provides online support for K-12 teachers and administrators across the state to improve teaching and learning.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory co-sponsored the mathematics summits and provided a wealth of materials for teachers. The Department meets weekly with university representatives to align K-12 with college admissions standards. The Department held two symposiums last year with professional organizations and other partners, resulting in consistent activities, trainings and resources to build capacity statewide. In June, the Department will meet with professional organizations to draft professional development plans.

Oregon's school improvement focuses on improving teaching and learning in six curriculum areas, (English, mathematics, science, the social sciences, the arts and second languages), six endorsement areas (arts and communications, business and management, industrial and engineering systems, health services, natural resources and human resources) and career-related learning standards. The Department works closely with the professional organizations in these and other areas. The Department's social sciences specialist is outgoing president of the Oregon Council for the Social Studies. The Department's science specialist was president-elect of the Oregon Science Teachers Association and continues to be actively involved with that group. The president of the Oregon Council of Teachers of Mathematics led a key workshop at the recent mathematics summit. The Department's English and second languages specialist works closely with the Oregon Council of Teachers of English and the Confederation of Oregon Foreign Language Teachers. The Department also works with various other organizations serving disadvantaged and second language learners, including the Oregon Summer Bilingual Institute, Oregon Association of Compensatory Educators, National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education, Interstate Migrant Education Council and Oregon Teachers of English Speakers and Other Languages.

Curriculum associations were essential to developing the academic content standards. They reviewed various drafts of the standards and recommended changes. The Department often asks curriculum association representatives to present workshops

and other professional development activities at events it sponsors and calls on them in a variety of other ways to provide subject matter expertise.

12. *ODE invests little time and few resources in professional development for its own employees.*

The Department agrees with this finding. Despite limited financial resources, limited out-of-state travel allowed and a heavy press of other demands, staff do manage to participate in some professional development activities. There also is significant internal collaboration. The Department holds all-staff meetings where the state superintendent, associates, assistants and others relate the vision and latest developments in Oregon's school improvement plan. The superintendent meets with project managers weekly. Project managers meet every two weeks. Staff in each office meet weekly.

Research and Analysis

13. *As Oregon continues to move to a performance-based system of education, ODE's ability to analyze data will become ever more crucial. However, ODE currently possesses little capacity to conduct research and analyze data on key issues such as student achievement and school finance.*

The Department agrees that its shift to a standards-based system makes the ability to analyze data extraordinarily important. The Department disagrees with the finding that it lacks capacity to conduct research and analysis. The information upon which this finding is based is inaccurate. The Department never declared the percent of students expected to meet the standards. The Department, not the Portland School District, analyzed 1996 state test scores and provided results of the study to the district.[2] The Department not only is capable of conducting that level of analysis but in fact did so.[3]

The Department agrees that it does not have sufficient data to determine district fiscal viability. It is unlikely that the state legislature would cede its analysis of educational revenues and expenditures to the Department.

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[1] The Department regrets that there were several out-of-date names and phone numbers in its school directory. The Department was aware of the problem before the WAAF report and continues to work toward solving it.

[2] The correct figures used in the Department's study of seven school districts are: 3 percent of students who took courses below algebra, 8 percent of students who took algebra, 38 percent of students who took geometry, 64 percent of students who took algebra II, and 100 percent of students who took calculus scored a 239 or above.

[3] It would be unwise to base state policy on a single correlational study. Correlational studies may inappropriately link cause with effect. Oregon wants a long-term solution, not a quick fix. In our effort to find long-term solutions, professional development research studies are connected with student performance data.

16. On the increasingly important dimension of school level information, ODE's current data system is inadequate.

The Department agrees that it does not collect district expenditure or other district financial data. However, it disagrees with the remainder of this finding.

Data should be collected with a purpose. MAP does not recommend what specific data should be collected nor what specific analyses would be possible with the data collected. Collecting input data and gauging the success of education based on that data is a 1960s model of education. Oregon is concerned with results, not inputs.

The Department provides the reports described. It provides information to legislators regarding how schools across the state are performing. Information regarding how Oregon assessment costs compare with similar states also is available. Since 1991, the Department has provided district superintendents with reports of how student performance in their districts compares with performance in schools with similar student populations. The Department provides information to parents comparing performance in their children's schools to performance in all other schools in the state. It also provides information to parents and the general public comparing academic performance of students in Oregon to students in the United States and other countries. It is developing a system to provide information on where high school graduates go to college and work.

The Department disaggregates state test scores by race and ethnic groups and socioeconomic factors. Dropout rates are disaggregated by race and ethnic groups. The Department also can disaggregate scores by disability category. The Department recognizes that a variety of factors combine to produce particular results and routinely warns its audiences against viewing data in isolation.

15. ODE's current management information system is hobbled by a set of interlocking conditions that reduces the utility of the data collected.

This finding appears to be based in part on an August 1996 report by the manager of the Department's management information system.* He is currently working with a team of data experts from every office within the Department to develop a better system within the confines of fiscal reality. MAP's cost estimates appear low.

16. Annual audits represent an underutilized opportunity for appropriate State oversight of district expenditure patterns.

The Department agrees. House Bill 3552, introduced in this legislative session, would require performance audits of local districts every five years. House Bill 3553 would

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* MAP did not interview the Department's director of technology and information resource management.

require an audit of factors used to compute the State School Fund distribution. Expanding local district audits would place an additional cost on local districts.

Communication

17. ODE, with limited resources, manages to communicate in multiple ways with policy makers, educators, and the public. However, ODE does not currently have a "feedback loop" which would enable it to gauge the effectiveness of communication with its various "publics."

The Department agrees that, with limited resources, it communicates in multiple ways with various audiences. It is developing a parent handbook to send to schools by the end of this school year. The handbook will address results expected of students and other issues of particular concern to parents and their children. The Department expects the information will be particularly useful as schools welcome back students and parents next fall.

The Department disagrees with the finding that it lacks a feedback loop. The Department seeks feedback in a variety of ways, including but not limited to the following:

- In the last two years, Department staff visited more than 50 percent of the state's schools on school improvement visits, gathering firsthand information from the field. Department staff visited many other schools too, including small and rural schools to discuss their successes and challenges in implementing the Certificate of Advanced Mastery.
- Educators in the field communicate with their regional contacts. At weekly staff meetings, regional contacts report their findings.
- Department staff attend Principal Leadership Network meetings, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory service provider meetings and monthly district superintendent meetings.
- The 21st Century Advisory Committee of teachers and administrators appointed by the State Board of Education meets regularly to provide input and feedback about the Department work.
- Oregon educators meet regularly with the Department to develop the standards and assessment system.
- Department staff communicate regularly with educators and members of the general public via e-mail. The Department maintains a web site and publicizes its e-mail and Internet addresses frequently.
- Focus groups of parents, teachers, business leaders, community representatives and others reviewed drafts of the content standards before State Board adoption.
- The Department includes a comment form in many of its school improvement publications.
- The Department periodically includes questions related to school improvement in polls conducted by the Oregon School Boards Association and other groups.

- The Department regularly reports to and receives feedback from the legislature.
- The State Board of Education meets regularly with the State Board of Higher Education. Department staff meet regularly with higher education staff to ensure that the certificate systems align with college admissions requirements.

II. Recommendations

Leadership

1. *The Oregon Department of Education should assume a more activist leadership role in improving curriculum and instruction in Oregon's schools.*

The Department agrees with this recommendation. It agrees with "informed observers" who give the Department "generally good marks for...carrying out the first tasks in the reform plan--building a statewide consensus around the standards...." The Department agrees with the recommendation that it should continue to invest its resources in developing a technically sound and legally defensible set of assessment instruments and procedures.

2. CIDE should be reorganized to reflect a priority for those functions most closely related to improving educational programs as well as to enhance necessary communication among key program improvement functions.

The Department agrees that its organizational structure could better reflect its new priorities. It also agrees it should add additional staff with subject matter expertise. However, adding new staff is difficult at current salary levels.

The reorganization suggestions described on page 87, section B of the MAP report, are less compelling, revisiting the structure in place in 1991.[1] The Department disagrees with the recommendation that monitoring and enforcement should be delegated to a small group of agency enforcers. Creating an enforcement division separate from curriculum and assessment, for example, would deprive the neediest schools of the services of those most likely to help. Since 1991, the Department has transformed its standardization process into a school improvement process. School improvement visits include a monitoring component while shifting most resources to review and technical assistance. By statute, on-site visits occur every three years. At Superintendent Paulus' request, the legislature passed Senate Bill 173 to complete the shift from compliance monitoring to technical assistance and support by allowing local school boards to certify district compliance with standards through annual assurance forms. The bill will allow the Department not only to shift state resources to activities designed to improve teaching and learning but also to target resources to individual district needs. For example, districts with declining test scores, highly mobile student

[1] At that time, the Department had a 21st Century Schools section (capacity building services) and a Standardization section (monitoring and enforcement section).

populations or numerous citizen complaints would receive assistance specific to their needs.

3. ODE should develop for every organizational unit annual workplans with measurable outcomes and budgets specified. Changes to these plans should be negotiated when indicated by changing priorities. Managers should be evaluated, at least in part, on the basis of how well their performance measures up against approved plans and budgets.

The Department agrees with this recommendation. Each organizational unit in the Department develops annual work plans to guide its activities throughout the year. Improvement in student performance is a significant part of each plan. In 1994, the Department of Administrative Services implemented a performance management process for all management and executive service personnel. This process identifies and measures individual, group and organization goals and objectives. Earlier this biennium, the Department began implementing a new accounting system. Next biennium, the Department plans to strengthen managerial accounting skills and tools managers to annual work plans and budget controls.

4. The Oregon Department of Education, in cooperation with the legislature and appropriate state agencies, should take the steps necessary to attract and retain education professionals with sufficient expertise, experience, credibility and stature to provide the leadership necessary to implement the Educational Act for the 21st Century.

The Department agrees it needs to attract and retain education professionals with sufficient expertise, experience, credibility and stature. The Department disagrees that this would be "cost neutral." The two-tier specialist classification recommended by MAP undoubtedly would be strenuously resisted by union members.

5. Oregon's elected position of Superintendent of Public Instruction should be replaced with an appointed position.

The Department agrees with this recommendation.

Monitoring and Enforcement

6. Conventional kinds of monitoring and enforcement activities should be streamlined and reduced.

The Department agrees. The change is underway with enactment of Senate Bill 110, in particular.

7. Essential monitoring and enforcement activities should be consolidated into a single, relatively small unit of ODE.

The Department disagrees with this recommendation for the reasons stated in its response to recommendation 2 above.

The Department is very much aware of Ed*Flex*, a federal initiative to provide school districts with flexibility in using federal dollars. Ed*Flex* is based on Oregon's school waiver procedure and was adopted in Congress through the efforts of Oregon's Senator Hatfield. Oregon became the first Ed*Flex* state (and one of only 12 in the country). Through Ed*Flex*, the State Board of Education can waive certain federal statutes and regulations. The Department also has used federal flexibility provisions in the Improving America's Schools Act and the School-to-Work Act, including provisions allowing states and local districts to file consolidated applications for federal funds.

Capacity Building

6. The Oregon Department of Education should strategically redeploy the resources currently being used for "technical assistance" in Oregon to create multiple networks of service providers across the state. The role of ODE should be to serve as a catalyst and clearinghouse for new, strategic service provision efforts.

The Department agrees with this recommendation. In many instances, it does serve as a catalyst, convener and organizer of professional development talent in the state and connects educators with available services. The Department is moving toward doing more in this area. The Department believes there are millions of dollars in existing school district budgets for professional development but has no legal authority to redirect use of that money. Professional development money the Department does control is used for sustained, capacity building activities directed at large groups of teachers and administrators who often are trained to return to their school sites and train others.

9. The Oregon Department of Education should assign a much higher priority to the professional development of its own staff.

The Department agrees with this recommendation. At this time, limited financial resources, time and out-of-state travel restrictions make it difficult to accomplish this goal.

Research and Analysis

10. The Oregon Department of Education needs greatly to increase its research and analytic capability.

The Department agrees with this recommendation.

11. The Oregon Department of Education needs to play a more active role in the development, collection and reporting of financial information.

The Department agrees with the recommendation as stated above. The recommended changes would require statutory authority to gather the data suggested.

12. To enhance its Management Information System, the Oregon Department of Education should establish a single database of information that is accessible to anyone within ODE and that provides a basis for responsive answers to requests for information from outside ODE.

The Department agrees it needs a single database. In fact, the plan to develop such a database is described in the Oregon Educational Technology Plan and the Information Resources Management Plan. Database development demands financial and human resources. Costs may not be entirely recovered. If this was were easy task, many state departments of education would have managed it, but few have done so. Arizona for example began developing such a database but the legislature refused the $1.3 million needed. The speed with which the Oregon plan will be implemented is contingent on the speed with which the Department locates the necessary resources.

Some of the data reported to the Department is stored on district computer systems. A significant amount of data is not even gathered on district computer systems at present. The problem is complex. Hiring an individual to standardize data formats is not enough. The Department has hired a database analyst to begin the effort, but the task also requires a data base coordinator and systems analyst.

13. ODE and the State Auditor should expand existing local district CPA audits to provide more information for policy makers.

The Department agrees that this change may be desirable but recognizes it will be an additional cost to school districts. House Bill 3553, currently before the legislature, would require local district audits of those factors used to compute the State School Fund.

Communication

14. In promoting a single, unifying vision of what public education is striving to become, the Oregon Department of Education should continue to adjust its communications to its various "publics" and should develop feedback ways capable of measuring the success of its multiple communication efforts.

The Department agrees with this recommendation. It will continue to use the channels of communication identified in the response to finding 11 above and also will develop additional means of receiving feedback.

There have never been as many public and private partnerships in education as have been developed in the last few years. Superintendent Paulus recently signed a formal agreement with Oregon's Chambers of Commerce to provide high school students with more opportunities to apply their learning to careers. Through partnerships with the Oregon Business Council and Associated Oregon Industries, schools are making their curriculum and instruction more rigorous and relevant. The Department recently secured grants from Wells Fargo and other private organizations to provide schools with funds to meet the new academic content and performance standards. The Department created an energy conservation program that saved seven school districts $1.3 million and earned the districts a top national award. It has created numerous partnerships with museums and other informal learning centers across the state to extend the vast resources of these educational institutions into classrooms. The Department is working with the governor's office, the Oregon Business Council and other state education groups on a broad-based, unified approach to education improvement.

APPENDIX A

METEOROLOGY

METHODOLOGY

This study represents a program approval of the Oregon Department of Education. The scope of this evaluation is ODE's role and function in relation to the state's kindergarten through twelfth grade public school system. Specifically excluded were the state special schools (for the deaf and the blind) and the Office of Community College Services. The evaluation was conducted by Management Analysis and Planning Associates (MAP), a San Francisco-based education consulting firm.

MAP was asked to review the following ODE functions: 1) assessment, 2) dissemination and management, 3) policy making, 4) technical assistance, 5) monitoring and enforcement, and 6) information management. Study objectives included determining ODE's effectiveness in achieving its stated missions, goals, and priorities; comparing ODE's mandated functions with its actual activities; evaluating ODE's capacity to assess its own performance and the performance of Oregon school districts; evaluating management techniques employed by ODE; comparing Oregon's Department of Education with other non-pilot/elective models from other states; and making recommendations designed to enhance ODE's ability to improve teaching and learning at the local district and school levels.

MAP conducted this evaluation utilizing as an organizing rubric the four basic roles of a state education department: (1) to help local education agencies provide educational leadership; (2) to create a climate of educational excellence is shared throughout the state; facilitate capacity at the local level so that schools are better able to carry out their duties; serving as a conduit for state and federal monies to the local level; and monitoring for effective, efficient, and lawful performance.

[redacted]

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

MAP reviewed a wide variety of written documents as part of the data gathering procedure. An illustrative list of these documents includes:

- Oregon Education Code
- Oregon Administrative Rules
- "Oregon Report Card, 1993-94"
- "Toward Implementing the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century: Working Designs for Change" (1993 report of the Oregon State Board of Education to the Oregon Legislative Assembly)
- "Task Force Summaries 1992" (Report of various state level education-related task forces)
- "School Governance and Finance Reform in the Context of Education Reform" (June 1992 report of the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary Education)
- "Questions and Answers" (1993 Oregon Department of Education update on the Educational Act for the 21st Century)
- "Certificate of Advanced Mastery Standards" (August 1994 second draft review)
- "Review of Oregon Content and Performance Standards" (July 1994 Report of the National Standards Review Team)
- "Curriculum Content Framework for Oregon Public Schools" (1994 report)
- "Oregon Benchmarks: Standards for Measuring Statewide Progress and Institutional Performance" (1993 report to the Legislature)
- "Admission Standards: Content and Process Areas, Proficiencies and Indicators" (publication of the Proficiency-Based Admission Standards System Project)
- "Guide to Interpreting the 1993 Oregon Statewide Assessment Results for Writing"

- A complement of documents distributed to local districts for particular financial purposes, including budget worksheets and information on applying for a share of Oregon's Goals 2000 dollars
- "Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and Oregon School Boards Association 1995-96 Survey of Salaries and Economic Benefits for Administrators in Oregon School Districts and ESDs," Salem, Oregon: Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and Oregon School Boards Association
- "1996 Survey of Salaries, Economic Benefits and Selected Policies for Teachers in Oregon School Districts," Salem, Oregon: Department of Education 1995-97 Legislative Adopted Budget Program Narrative.
- "Oregon's Annual Performance Report: Dwight D. Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Program," State Education Agency, Program Year 1994-95.
- Working papers of the Oregon Audits Division's 1996 Statewide Audit, including apportionment formula calculations.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Interviews are the most efficient means by which to secure first-hand information from a wide variety of individuals representing multiple perspectives and levels of expertise. In the course of the evaluation of the Oregon Department of Education, MAF conducted more than 150 interviews of individuals knowledgeable about, or at least keenly interested in, education in the state including state officials, Educational Service District (ESD), school district, and school level administrators, and representative of key education interest groups.

State Level Interviews

Interviews with individuals whose principal interest or expertise focuses on the state level included:

- *State Policy Makers* – the Governor, selected (Republican and Democratic) members of the Legislature, the Secretary of State, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and members of the State Board of Education

- *Department of Education Staff* – Deputy Superintendent, Office of Educational Support Services; Deputy Superintendent, Office of State Board Relations; representatives (including individual chiefly responsible for) the Office of Assessment and Technology; Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Field Services; Office of Professional Technical Education; Pupil Transportation and School District Services; Public Information; School Finance and Data Information Services; Offices of Compensatory Education and Special Education; and Office of Management Services

- *Representatives of Other Relevant State Agencies* – Department of Revenue, Office of the State Budget, Legislative Fiscal Office, Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, Educational Policy and Planning Office, State Chancellor of Higher Education

- *Representatives of Major Advocacy Groups* – Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, Oregon School Boards Association, Oregon Education Association, Oregon Parent-Teacher Association, Oregon Association of School Business Officials, and Oregon School Facilities Management Association

- *Representatives of Other Education-Affiliated Groups and Organizations* – Curriculum associations dedicated to mathematics, English/language arts,

science, social science, art, foreign language, health, and vocational education; the Governor's Quality Education Commission; and the Northwest Council for Computer Education.

ESD, District, and School Level Interviews

Visits were made to, and interviews conducted in, a range of Education Service Districts, local school districts, and schools. The purpose of these visits and interviews was to gain a first-hand, on-the-ground perspective from 'clients' regarding their perceptions of the role and function of the Department of Education.

Selected ESD superintendents and other officials were interviewed.[1] At the district level, the superintendent and, where possible, other individuals such as members of the superintendent's cabinet and district lobbyist were interviewed. Selected elementary, middle, and high schools also were visited. On these occasions, conversations were held with the principal, often other administrators, and with teachers.

ESD, district, and school visits were designed to provide SBAP with additional data regarding the ways in which education policy directions established at the state level are playing themselves out at the local level. The findings from these interviews were further elucidated by the results of the survey, described in the next section.

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[1] All ESD Superintendents were included in the survey, described in the next section of this chapter.

THE SURVEY

A survey of local educators was conducted by Peter Hart Research, under contract to MAP for purposes of the OEIB evaluation.

A total of 512 telephone interviews were conducted with school district administrators and principals by Hart Research's executive interviewing staff between October 17 and November 1, 1996. Of this total, 176 were with local school district administrators, 39 were with Education Service District administrators, and 108 were with principals. In districts whose size required interviews with more than one administrator, the superintendent was asked to volunteer the names of one or more administrators in the district who had the most contact with the Oregon Department of Education.

After the interviews had been completed, a subsample of the respondents was recontacted to verify that the data had been accurately recorded. The questionnaires were coded, keypunched, and tabulated on standard computer equipment, using Hart Research's in-house facilities. This study is based on a quota sample of school district administrators and principals throughout Oregon. The sample consisted of a master list of Oregon school districts and ESDs, including their superintendents, and a second list of school principals -- both provided by the Oregon Department of Education. Each list was segmented into five groups based on district enrollment, and then stratified geographically. A quota of interviews was established for each population group.

Several approaches were possible in the sampling plan. A typical approach would have been to treat each school district administrator as an element, stratify the list by school district enrollment, and then interview every "nth" school district administrator to attain the total number of interviews. The results, however, would have been dominated by superintendents from the very smallest school districts, because there are so many of them.

The approach we chose was to segment the list into five subgroups based on student enrollment -- large districts with enrollment of greater than 35,000 medium

districts with enrollment between 10,000 and 24,999, districts with enrollments between 4,000 and 9,999, small districts with between 2,000 and 3,999 students, and the smallest districts with enrollments of less than 2,000 students. A quota of interviews then was established for each of these five groups, which was roughly proportionate to the student enrollment and which would allow for a sufficient number of interviews for subgroup analysis. Some weighting of the sample by size of enrollment was done to reflect more precisely the enrollment pattern within the state.

The reason for drawing a carefully designed, scientific random sample, rather than a haphazard sample, was not just to collect a lot of interviews, but to be able to make inferences about the attitudes, perceptions, opinions, and characteristics of the population and subpopulations from which the sample was drawn, and to be able to do so within a known range of what is called "sampling error," that is, random variation due to chance, rather than bias.

Thus, the results are subject to sampling error -- i.e. the difference between the results obtained from the sample and those that would have been obtained by surveying all local district administrators, ESD administrators, and school principals. In the case of administrators, the sampling error in this survey is minimal, however, because the sample size represents such a large proportion of all administrators. This is not quite the case with the principals, as only 168 were interviewed statewide. For principals, the results have a margin of error of ± 10%.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of relevant education statutes, rules, regulations, and constitutional provisions for purposes of this study was undertaken by Augenblick and Myers (A&M) of Denver, Colorado, under contract to MHF. The work began with a detailed summary of the Educational Act for the 21st Century. This statute was summarized first because it so directly applied to the scope of the CEIE program evaluation.

Next, remaining statutes were summarized. Review of the education-related constitutional provisions and education rules and regulations was also undertaken, committed to writing, and shared with the rest of the evaluation team.

A&M's experience in other states, research on policy implementation, and a specific frame of reference that comes from a combination of research and experience guided this work. John Myers, who led this effort, is a former member of the Kansas Legislature and has seven years' experience conducting statutory reviews as Education Program Director at the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The research contribution to the analytic frame of reference is derived from a number of sources but most particularly from a composite study, Education Policy Implementation (edited by Allan Odden, State University of New York Press, 1991). Some of the key concepts from the research that framed the statutory review were: 1) ability to enforce the statute, 2) level of detail needed in the law, 3) the connectedness to other policies, and 4) the appropriateness of the policy to state level action.

APPENDIX B

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Readers interested in delving more deeply into the literature on the emerging new leadership role for State Departments of Education in the era of standards-based reform are invited to consult these additional sources of information.

- "Building Support for Education Reform." Washington, DC: National Governors' Association, 1995.

This report offers a set of strategies for policy makers and educators interested in developing effective communication with the public on education reform. Suggestions are presented for crafting messages, communicating the same message to different audiences, and so on.

- Corcoran, Thomas B. "Transforming Professional Development for Teachers: A Guide for State Policy Makers." Paper prepared for the National Governors Association, New Jersey. Rutgers University, The Consortium for Policy Research in Education, October 1995.

A review of the research regarding successful - and unsuccessful - staff development practices.

- Education Commission of the States. "Breaking without Breaking: Improving Education through Flexibility and Choice." Denver, CO: June 1996.

Summarizes state efforts to promote higher standards through increased school autonomy. The report also outlines strategies for transitioning from a bureaucratic school organization to a more autonomous school structure.

- Fossum, Richard F. and Susan Fuhrman, eds. The Governance of Urban Schools. 1994. ERIC Clearinghouse, ERIC/CUE, Alexandria, VA.

Compiles essays on policy development at the state and national levels, state curriculum reform, development and management and district and school roles in curriculum reform for school researchers and practitioners.

- Fowler, William J. Jr. "Financial Accounting for Local and State School Systems." 1996.

The latest version of Handbook 2G, a school accounting and financial standards manual in use in Oregon and many other states.

- Fuhrman, Susan. Politics and System Education Reform. Consortium for Policy Research in Education, RR-13 (May 1994).

This research report looks at the political problems and challenges facing state implementation of systemic reform.

- Fullan, Michael G. and Suzanne Stiegelbauer. The New Meaning of Educational Change. 1991. Teachers College Press, Columbia University, NY.

This remains one of the most insightful studies of the complex nature of educational change. It contains chapters on the role of state departments of education in that process.

- McLaughlin, Milbrey and Joan E. Talbert. "Contexts that Matter for Teaching and Learning." Stanford University: Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching, March 1993.

This report highlights major findings from a 5-year nationwide study of various education "contexts" -- including the structure of professional communities, integrated visions of education reform, and school characteristics -- that impact teaching and learning.

- "A Matter of Responsibility: Education Governance at the Crossroads." October 1996. The National Association of State Boards of Education.

This study reviews the changes and challenges facing state boards of education in the 50 states.

- "A New Architecture for Education Reform." The Business Roundtable, prepared by Paul T. Hill and Holly E. Harvey. 1996.

This report provides a history of the National Business Roundtable's involvement in education reform and its proposed guidelines for reform in the 50 states.

- O'Day, Jennifer, Margaret E. Goertz and Robert E. Floden. "Building Capacity for Education Reform." Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Policy Briefs, RB-18 (November 1995).

Describes strategies for increasing school capacity to improve instruction, including professional development, assessment and the political process.

- [illegible] Professional Development for Educators: A Process for Boosting High Standards." Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, [illegible]

This very short brochure offers useful, explicit suggestions regarding the structure of professional development and provides a list of questions policy makers should ask as they assess the degree to which staff development offerings are useful.

- Richardson, Virginia (editor). Teacher Change and the Staff Development Process. New York: Teachers College Press, 1990.

A series of very studies on teacher professional development with special emphasis on the teaching of reading.

- Rothman, Richard, with Angela Patricia Wilde. "What's the Money Worth?" Economic Policy Institute, 1999.

This report argues that school spending has increased less than many observers believe over the last two decades and that schools employ relatively productive

- Smith, James B. "Leadership Schools Control: A Strategic Approach to Creating School Reform." Middle Grades School State Policy Initiative. Research Council on Educational Reform, Council of Chief State School Officers. Washington, DC, 1995.

This monograph, recently addressed with information against schools. It presents a three-step model for supporting schools which service each other's school of recommendations for effective leadership planning.

- "The Technology Road Map: An Implementation Planning Guide for Computer Technology in K-12 School Districts." Microsoft Corporation, 1996.

A guidebook for developing the use/implementation of technology in schools.

- "Using What We Have to Get the Most Out of It: Productivity Gains and American Education." A Report by the Committee on Productivity in the Schools, New York: Teachers College Press, The Century Initiative and the Economy, October 1999.

This report argues that the country's challenge facing American education is to make better use of resources. It combines findings and recommendations in the areas of governance, management, finance, and teaching and learning.

[illegible]

B. The State of Oregon's use of a tri-agency committee to oversee the contractor and its work. This committee was comprised of two representatives from the Legislative Fiscal Office, one representative from the Department of Administrative Services, and two representatives from the Oregon Audits Division.

C. The Audits Division's review of the contractor's work as cited above. The Audits Division is certified by the National State Auditors Association's (NSAA) external peer review program. One Audits Division member of the tri-agency committee has extensive experience as an NSAA peer reviewer, having participated in three peer reviews, both as a peer team member and as a peer team supervisor.

Continuing Education Requirements. The first general standard (Section 3.6) states that " The staff assigned to conduct the audit should collectively possess adequate professional proficiency for the tasks required." Section 3.6 specifies continuing education and training requirements in terms of minimum hours (80) per two year period, no less than 20 of which can be attributed to a single year. Twenty-four of the 80 hours must pertain to government-related subjects.

Again, there were compensating controls:

A. The staff employed on this engagement were highly educated, with five of the 10 team members cited on the report cover having doctorates and four others having other advanced degrees.

B. The team members possessed extensive subject matter expertise.

As a result of the foregoing analysis, the Oregon Audits Division concluded that the non-compliance cited above had no adverse impact on the quality of the contractor's work or on the quality of the final report.

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The mission of the Audits Division is to "Protect the Public Interest and Improve Oregon Government." The Oregon Constitution provides that the Secretary of State shall be, by virtue of his office, Auditor of Public Accounts. The Audits Division exists to carry out this duty. The division reports to the elected Secretary of State and is independent of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of Oregon government. The division audits all state officers, agencies, boards, and commissions and oversees audits and financial reporting for local governments.

DIRECTORY OF KEY OFFICIALS

Acting State Auditor	Sam Cochran
Deputy State Auditor	Sharron Goggins, CPA, CFE

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Oregon Audits Division
Public Service Building
Salem, Oregon 97310
503-986-2255 Hotline: 800-336-8218
Internet: Audits.Hotline@state.or.us
http://www.sos.state.or.us/audits/audithp.htm

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